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ROMANTIC STORIES OF THE LEGAL PROFESSION: A MOST REMARKABLE WILL.

I.

PROFANE laymen believe that, when the cloth is removed at a lawyers' dinner, the oldest member of the profession present rises, and solemnly proposes, amid enthusiasm too deep for applause, this solemn toast—'The man who makes his own Will.' The story has, at any rate, the merit of being well invented; for most assuredly that man has a fool for his client in a double and treble meaning of the famous saying about men who are their own lawyers: and it is true enough, and I, an old lawyer, say it, with all respect for that science of common sense popularly called 'the law,' that the people who find their way into court, and learn what Costs mean, have mostly got into the predicament through having too strong an antipathy to lawyers and their bills. But I think it is even worse than common folly when a testator, mostly out of self-conceit, leaves a Chancery suit instead of an inheritance to his heirs. Women are not, in this respect, quite so criminally imbecile as men are, because they are mostly free from the little knowledge which is at the root of most bad wills. But then they are apt to make a more thorough hash of things when

they make any at all. On the whole, I should place makers of their own wills in the following order of badness, taking the extreme type in each degree of comparison: *Positive*—Bad, Elderly Gentlemen. *Comparative*—Worse, Elderly Ladies. *Superlative*—Worst, Lord Chancellors. But not even a Lord Chancellor ever managed to draw up so extraordinarily bewildering a will as Miss Bridgita Molloy. She could have taught something even to the late Lord W——y. As the case never actually came into court, the details will probably be new to most of my readers; but I heard them all at the time, and have the clearest recollection of them—and no wonder. On this occasion there is no harm in giving real names. And that is fortunate; for the story could not possibly be told without them. It simply defies invention.

Miss Bridgita Molloy was a maiden lady of royal descent, who lived at an English watering-place—I really forget whether at Bath, or Clifton, or Cheltenham, or Malvern, or Leamington, or Buxton; but it was at some such place, and luckily the name of the town is the one detail which does not matter. For the sake of

avoiding blanks and dashes, I will call it Chatterbury, as more or less applicable to them all—at least, in Miss Molloy's time. She was a little eccentric in trifles; but, in all essential things, as notoriously whole-minded, and strong-minded too, as any lady of sixty in the whole kingdom. I must enter a little into her family history; but only so far as is needful. She had been the second of three beautiful sisters, the daughters and coheireesses of a gentleman of large estate in Ireland. They were much run after in their girlhood, and had once been known as the three pocket-beauties—less in allusion to their size than to their reputation—then somewhat uncommon in Dublin—of being worth marrying for something more lasting than beauty. Well, to cut a long story short before it is well begun; the eldest, Miss Lucis Molloy (a quaint first name; but it always struck me as a singularly pretty one for a pretty girl), eloped with a gentleman, also descended from royalty—so far descended, indeed, that there was scarcely a further social depth left him to descend to—named Fitzgerald O'Birn; and the youngest, Miss Judith, went off with a foreign refugee, a sort of Hungarian-German-Polish dancing-master Count, named Ferentz Steldl. Ferentz is the Hungarian for Francis, I believe; Steldl, I fancy, is Bavarian or Tyrolese. Both marriages turned out miserably—so miserably, that Miss Bridgita forswore romance, and even matrimony, and actually kept her vow.

She also kept more than her vow—she kept her fortune. When the creditors got hold of Mr. Molloy's great estates, he left the very handsome surplus left him in cash and Consols absolutely to his one wise daughter. Not a

penny went into the pockets of Count Steldl or Mr. O'Birn. It was a bitter disappointment to both gentlemen; and I believe they avenged their wrongs upon their wives after the manner of their kind.

So while poor Madame Steldl suffered and starved all over Europe, and poor Mrs. O'Birn starved and suffered in the larger and darker continent of London, Miss Molloy lived alone and in dignified opulence at Chatterbury. She was a first-rate economist, and her patrimony had prospered. She used to amuse herself by speculating in stock—always shrewdly and cautiously. By the time she was sixty, it was reckoned that her income could not amount to less than a safe twelve hundred a year, of which she saved at least five.

Now what in the world was to become of all this money if Miss Bridgita Molloy ever happened to die? I have been thinking of the best form in which I can tell the story of what did happen shortly; and I think it best, on the whole, to undergo a transformation, and multiply the result by two. That is to say, I will henceforth speak as if I were myself Miss Molloy's solicitor, my old friend, the late Charles Lake of Chatterbury; and I will, in addition, use the privilege accorded to authors and to counsel of speaking after the facts, and so of putting them into clearer and more readable form than if I followed them in order of detail. So, for the present, instead of being your correspondent, Mr. Editor, Mr. Thomas Key, formerly of Burgham, I will, for the nonce, write to you in the person of Mr. Charles Lake of Chatterbury, a very dry matter-of-fact man of business indeed, who told the tale as it was told to me.

II.

ONE afternoon the mail-coach from London set down two gentlemen at the Old Swan, Chatterbury. Both had remarkably little luggage for those days, when men could not run from York to London and back again in a few hours. Both ordered a bed, both walked into the coffee-room, and one of them rang the bell. When the waiter answered it, one of the gentlemen ordered cold brandy, the other hot whisky. And the waiter's report at the bar was not favourable to either. But with that opinion lack of luggage may have had something to do.

There were other resemblances between the two men. Both were well past middle age; neither looked like one of the hunting men, or officers on half-pay, or rheumatic patients, who formed the bulk of the male visitors to Chatterbury. But there all likeness came to an end. He of the whisky was a long lean man, with fierce untrimmed whiskers, a shiny bald head, bloodshot blue eyes, and a tell-tale nose, dressed in the height of the fashion, with a tendency to overstepping it into loudness. He had ordered his grog in a thick rich brogue. He of the brandy, on the other hand, was short and squat, with a dirty sallow complexion, thick grizzled hair, and twinkling black eyes. He wore the then unusual ornament, if ornament it be, of a moustache; and, for the rest, was clean, or rather half, shaved, and there was something Frenchified about his costume.

'Waitther!' said the Irishman. 'If anybody calls here to-dee or to-morrow for Mejor O'Birn,—I'm Mejor O'Birn!'

The other started for a moment, and laid his glass down.

'Shall I comprehend, Mon-

sieur,' he asked, 'that you give your name?'

'Me name! And why wouldn't I give me name?' said O'Birn, with a little leap in his chair. 'Tis none to be ashamed of, anyhow. I'd like to see the man with a name to his back as good as O'Birn!'

'One hundred thousand pardons, Monsieur. I am glad that I know—that is all. Eh, but one thousand thousand pardons, Monsieur Fitzgerald O'Birn.'

The Major's jaw fell, and all his face, save his nose, grew suddenly pale.

'Sure, now, ye're not goin' to tell me ye're one of thim blagyard Jews!' cried he. 'Sure 'twould be too crool an' all, when I've come down to see me own wife's sither, that's rollin' over and over in jools an' gold. An' ye've followed me all the wee down here; an' this is a free country! An' bad luck to the country where an officer an' gentleman mustn't pee a visit to his wife's relations without being hunted by all Jerusalem in full cry! Come, Moses, ye'll give me another dee.'

'Aha! So you think no one shall know your name but the people which shall hold your bills, Monsieur O'Birn? I hold not your bills; I am not fool. You come down to see Mdle. Bridgita, then, I shall comprehend!'

'Sure, then, 'tis the divlle ye are! But that's better, anyhow, than bein' what I thought ye—'

'You shall not be so sure, Monsieur. I shall know your Christian name, and I shall know the Christian name of the sister of your wife, because I am Ferentz Steldl, Monsieur O'Birn! Aha! you shall have the tremblement perceptible, Monsieur O'Birn!'

'Hwhat!' cried the Major, leaping to his feet, with a shout and a glare. 'Ye sit there in cold

blood, and ye tell me, Mejer Fitzgerald O'Birn, ye're that—miscreant—that blagyard—that snake in the grass—that drinkin', swindlin', mane-spirited, undher-handed, slandherin', murderin', onrespectable thief of the whole world, Ferentz Steldl! And ye think to escape from the fist of a gentleman this dee?

'Patience, patience, *mon beau-frère*,' said Steldl, without the slightest change of tone. 'Fine words shall not butter what you call the *panais*. It is you who shall escape from me. You shall leave this town. I shall guard Mdlle. Molloy, sister of my wife, aunt of my son, from you. For that I am here.'

Something in the significant calmness of his foreign brother-in-law calmed the Major down. He returned to his chair, shifted his glass on the table, and said,

'An' 'tis for that I'm here too,' said he. 'I'm here to defend me own sither, an' me wife's sister, an' me gurl's aunt, from all the Counts out of Hungary an' the Siven Dyles. An' ye'll move from your sate if ye dare.'

'I shall not desire,' said Steldl. 'I am well where I am. I desire to have the eye on you, my *beau-frère*. While you shall sit there, I shall sit here, if it shall be to the death, Monsieur O'Birn. It shall be the duel *à la mort*, Monsieur, and we shall fight with the bottoms of the chairs.'

'Then, faith, I'll sit like the hen of Banagher—an' she sat till the sod undher her began to crow. So ye think Miss Biddy'll open the crack of her door to the likes of you?'

'Why not? She is sister of my wife, and aunt of my son.'

'Aunt of my daughter, ye mane. Poh! what'd she know of a son of yours?'

'You mock of yourself, my

beau-frère. Have she not buy my son Ferentz the commission of the Foot, and keep him, so long he see not me?'

'Then ye lie in your throat, Ferentz Steldl! 'Tis me own daughter, an' her own goddaughter an' niece, Lucis Bridgita, that she's kept at school at her own charge, an' keeps in pocket-money as long as I don't see her more than woonst a year.'

'She do that for your daughter? Impossible, Monsieur!'

'She do that for your son? Mr. Steldl, ye lie!'

The way in which these two gentlemen quarrelled, without showing the least sign of coming to blows, gave the waiter, who was not far off, an altogether fresh view of the possibilities of human nature. Obviously there was a world in which gentlemen cared more for their physical than their moral skins.

'Take yourself off, my *beau-frère*. In effect, she adopt Ferentz, my son. She leave all to him.'

'Ye're a fool, Steldl—that's what she's been makin' of ye, the old screw o' the world! As if she'd lave a penny to any but her own niece Lucis, afther doin' all she has for the darlin' child!'

Steldl was the sort of man who would be given to shrugging his shoulders, like a Frenchman in a play: so he no doubt did so now. 'She cannot have done so much for Miss Lucis, or I shall have hear. I know not till now she have done so much for the daughter of the black sheep; but what shall a school-bill be, after all? Bah!—a bagatelle. But a commission in the Foot—ah, that is another shoe! And you consent not to see your own flesh and blood for the sake of a bill of a school!'

'I'm a betther sort of a father than to sthand in me own child's

wee of a fortune. And ye sit there an' tell me she's spent the price of a commission on *your* son — unless 'tis in the Marines, where they'll believe the tale.'

'*Parole de gentilhomme*, Monsieur O'Birn, I am father of Ferentz Steldl, lieutenant of King George—'

'And I of Lucis Bridgita O'Birn, that'll be in the shoes of Miss Molloy.'

The two fathers emptied their tumblers, and the Major rang for more. Neither meant to lose this sitting match if he could help it, that was clear.

'If I didn't know,' said Steldl slowly and impressively, 'there is no school in the land who shall teach for no pay, I shall not believe. But she shall but toss one bone to one hungry dog—that shall be all.'

Now Major O'Birn, though he had never met his brother-in-law in the flesh before, was a citizen of that world which knew that the refugee had taught fencing in his time, and had won several bets that he would make a bullet mark out a pack of cards. So, instead of retorting with a charge of hot whisky into his brother-in-law's yellow face, he contented himself by saying, with an angry grin,

'An' what'll ye say when I tell ye *my* wife is with her own siether this very dee, as thick as bees in a hive?'

The Irishman, though he had kept his temper the worst, won the match after all. Steldl leapt from his chair with a volley of language that proved his own temper to be no deeper than the thinnest part of his skin.

'*Your* wife, you fortune-hunting Irish beggar! *Your* wife with Miss Molloy! So that's why you've been keeping me here?' He threw the rest of his liquor into the fire, and sent a blaze up the

chimney. Then he buttoned his coat defiantly, saying, 'I will see Miss Molloy.'

'An' that's what I call mighty waste of good drink,' said Major O'Birn, gulping down the remainder of his own. 'Yes, ye may go, Steldl. I won't bother even to see her door shut in your face—though, faith, it would be fun.'

'And I tell you, Monsieur,' cried Steldl, raising his voice into a sort of scream, 'that it is *my* wife which is now with Miss Molloy!'

The two husbands glared at one another fiercely. And, short of running the risk of being knocked down by the other, that was all left them to do. Words had done their worst; and they were evidently not men of deeds.

No; Miss Bridgita Molloy had not turned out a bad sister after all. She would never even acknowledge so much as the existence of the Major and the Count, and had an odd way of speaking of the married Miss Molloys as if they were widows; but she did not visit the sins of the fathers upon the children. At a very early age, too early for them to make a deliberate choice between their father and their fortunes, she had sent both the little Ferentz and the little Lucis Bridgita to good schools, and, as they grew bigger, sometimes had them to Chatterbury for the holidays to meet their mothers, who accepted the arrangement more reasonably than mothers always will. For that matter, neither Count nor Major cared to be bothered with a baby, nor always with a wife, so that the two young children were removed from evil influence as much as lay in Miss Molloy's power. She was a very strict aunt and a terribly exacting patroness; but she meant to be kind, and was really kind in her own

way. I never saw much of the children, but I liked what I did see. Ferentz was a fine, frank, high-spirited young fellow, without any of his father's vices, as is often the way with the sons of prodigal fathers, and Lucis was almost as pretty as her mother had been when she eloped with the Major. Rather a quiet girl, I used to think, but amiable, and with a dash of her aunt Biddy's good sense about her way of speaking. But it was one of Miss Molloy's caprices that the left hand which she held out to one sister should know nothing of how the right hand was held out to the other. Neither mother, neither child was ever her guest at the same time as the other mother and the other child. I doubt if Ferentz knew that he had a cousin Lucis, or she that she had a cousin Ferentz. Most assuredly each of the mothers believed that she alone was favoured with her sister's bounty. That reserve was one of Miss Molloy's very strongest foibles, if one may properly call a foible strong. She would never tell even me, her lawyer, more than she thought absolutely necessary about anything; and so of course even she, with all her good business qualities, would sometimes make little mistakes out of which I found it difficult to help her.

And the same course that she pursued with her lawyer she followed with her doctor too—that is to say, with a certain doctor who happened to be a personal friend; for she used to boast that she had never had a medicine-bottle in the house but once, and that she had thrown out of window. She often said that she had nothing of a coffin about her but the strength of its nails; and yet the very first time she was compelled to send for her medical friend in a pro-

fessional capacity, he found that she must have been suffering for years from a most painful internal and organic disease, and a fatal one. How do hungry relations always hear such news? Had she made her Will? If not, would she recognise the fact that the nature of her disease admitted of no delay? And so, for the first time, Mrs. O'Birn and Mrs. Steldl, at the expense of their husbands' creditors, flew on the wings of sisterly affection, and met together at Miss Molloy's bedside. And, with the instinct of vultures, the Count and the Major had been unable to keep from hovering, as near as they dared, within the shadow of a death that meant so much to them. Neither, I firmly believe, had until that meeting the faintest suspicion that, if only a proper will were made, he would not become the father of Miss Molloy's sole heir. That discovery that her generosity had not been monopolised by either must have been a deservedly bitter moment for both the greedy blackguards. And, for all their brag, each knew that he dared no more knock at Miss Molloy's door than he dared commit assault and battery; while, for aught each could tell, the other might be high in the favour of the poor lady who was dying a few streets away.

It was—for it must have been—a strange meeting between the two forlorn, faded, worse than widowed, half-childless women by the deathbed of one who to them had for many years represented strength, health, comfort—all that they had wanted since they were girls together long and long ago. There they had to sit, one on each side of the bed, conscious of a question she had been commanded by her tyrant to ask, conscious that the other was similarly burdened, unable to ask it in the

other's presence, not daring nor knowing how to ask it had she been alone by the bedside. For I declare that even I myself would sooner have led a forlorn hope than have asked Miss Molloy what she meant to do with her money. I like to think of the dismay of the two husbands, but I don't in pity like to think of what the two poor wives must have suffered in silence that afternoon.

I had already—I need not tell anybody who knows places like Chatterbury—been put in the position of being able to report the conversation between the two gentlemen in the coffee-room. They had not spoken in whispers, and the Old Swan had key-holes and its waiter had ears. So I was not very much surprised when, in the course of the evening, I received a summons to attend Miss Molloy.

'Ah!' said her doctor, who was dining with me when the summons came. I report the exclamation, because it was meant to mean a great deal.

'I hope and trust I find you better, Miss Molloy,' said I, when I was shown into her bedroom, which she had not left for some weeks now.

'No, Mr. Lake, I don't,' said she. 'I didn't believe I was a dying woman three hours ago, but I do now. Don't say anything stupid. I've not lived such a bad life that I'm afraid; and I've never been afraid to face anything in my life, except marriage, and I'm not going to begin now.' She was right; with all her little oddities she had been really a good, if somewhat hard-mannered, woman, and always a singularly brave one. 'I know I'm dying, because the hawks and kites are abroad. We used to keep a banshee in the old times, and it's something between

a Count and a Major. Those poor silly sisters of mine have been here bothering me to make my will. And if you don't know what that means, Mr. Lake, I do. It means death, as sure as I'm lying here.'

'You mean to say that your sisters have mentioned such a thing?'

It was really not a case for common phrases. Miss Molloy was—Miss Molloy.

'Not in words—no, poor things. But there they sat and cried, and there was nothing but Will—Will—Will, in every tear. 'Tisn't them I blame, though 'tis not nice to be cried over that way. 'Twas as much as I could do not to say Won't—Won't—Won't; but I've always had the wit to hold my tongue. Ah, Mr. Lake, since then I've been thinking how maybe 'tis better to have somebody to drop a real tear over your own self, if 'tis half brandy, and from a Count or a Major, than to have lived in peace only to die all alone. But that's fool's talk; and I didn't ask ye not to talk like a stupid that ye might listen the better to a fool.'

'Surely,' said I, 'you are not alone. Lieutenant Steldl—Miss O'Birn—'

'Pooh! who remembers a dead aunt for a whole day, I'd like to know? Would I want to make a boy and a girl cry before their own troubles come? 'Tis business I sent ye for. There's pens and paper. I am going to make my will.'

'I am sure you are right in that. I am entirely at your service, Miss Molloy.'

'Then,' said she, 'I want you to draw my will *now*. No instructions, mind, to be drafted to-morrow. I might be dead by then—who knows? My pain's almost left me; and that's a bad sign, if

death's a bad thing. It will be very short and very simple. Take a sheet of the big foolscap—that'll be plenty. Now write, *This is the last Will and Testament of Bridgita*—mind ye spell it with a *ta*, not a *da*; and with only one *i*, mind; for I'm particular about that way, for 'tis the way my mother spelt it, right or wrong—*of Bridgita Molloy, of Chatterbury, in the county of*—whatever it was—*spinster*: praise glory for that, anyhow! But ye needn't put that in—the glory, I mean.—*Spinster: I give and bequeath to Rachel Andrews, my housekeeper, the sum of three hundred pounds, free of legacy duty, and I request her to take charge of my dog Dash, knowing that she will fulfil my request according to the intention wherewith I make the same. I give and bequeath to every person who shall have been in my service for one month preceding my decease the amount of one year's wages. I give and bequeath to my friend John Kirwan, of Chatterbury, Doctor of Medicine, the sum of five hundred pounds, free of legacy duty. I give and bequeath to my brother-in-law, Ferentz Steldl the elder—is it all right, so far?*

'Quite. But how do you spell Ferentz?' asked I.

'*F, e, r, e, n, t, s*—Ferentz Steldl. The boy's name is Firentz, with an *i*. I won't have him bear his father's name.—*My brother-in-law, Ferentz Steldl the elder, the sum of one shilling, free of legacy duty, to buy a mourning-ring I give and bequeath to my brother-in-law, Fitzgerald O'Birn, the sum of one shilling, free of legacy duty, to buy a mourning-ring. I give and bequeath to my dear nephew, Firentz—with an i—Steldl, Lieutenant in the Army, the sum of one thousand pounds. I give and bequeath to Lucis Bridgita O'Birn, my niece, the sum of one thousand*

pounds. And all the residue of my property, whether real or personal, I give, bequeath, and devise to—'

She paused. Up to this point she had not needed my help, so expert she seemed in the art of the testator.

'*Devise to,*' echoed I. 'Well, Miss Molloy? The residuary legatee was to be the important personage; for he or she would come in for at least twenty-five thousand pounds, and perhaps a good deal more, after all debts and legacies were paid.

But still she paused. All the rest had been mere child's play.

'Mr. Lake,' she said at last, 'I may be dying, but I'm not an old woman, and I might live for years. Now my sisters are gone, I feel less like dying than I did when I sent for ye to make my will. I've done all the justice I need do; and I don't want a handsome property to be split up—that would be a sort of a shame. Neither Firentz nor Lucis has any expectation of getting what I have to leave, whatever others may. It's for the sake of the property that it must go into one hand. And, Mr. Lake, I daren't trust the very walls of my bedroom with the name I choose. If I was to ask you to write the name in my will, I should have to speak it to you, and for aught I know the Count or the Major may have bribed the nurse to listen at that very door.'

'Write it down for me, then; here is the pen.'

'No. The paper might get dropped about, and—no; I'd rather you wouldn't know the name. It isn't that I don't trust ye, but ye might say it out in a dream, and your wife might hear it, and she might let it out by some chance to somebody who might talk about it in a place like Chatterbury, and then the Count or the Major would

get at the secret as sure as ye're alive. And then there's no counting the villainies that wouldn't be done; they'd be trying to get me shut up in a madhouse, and forging and murdering some one maybe; anyhow, there'd be no comfort in living, if I am to live any more. I've thought of a way to keep off all danger, and to make it everybody's interest to support the will, and to save every bit of bother. I'll write the name myself in the will with my own hand, and then cover it over while ye write the rest, and ye'll give me your word of honour ye won't try to see what I've written till I'm dead and gone.'

The whim was a stupid one, I thought, for a testator who was in other respects proving herself so clear-headed; but there was certainly no apparent harm in indulging her. 'But,' said I, 'as you wish to take such extreme precautions, does it not strike you that it is easier for an expectant heir to overhaul a will than for a solicitor to break confidence in a dream?'

'I've thought of all that,' said she. 'Of course they'll try to overhaul, and where there's a will there's a way—but there's more ways of killing a dog than hanging him. I'll manage so that if every servant in the house is in the Count's pay or the Major's, they shall earn their money for nothing at all. So I'll take the pen, if ye please, and the will; give me a dip of ink, and any scrap of paper ye find handy.'

I gave her all she asked for. She first of all, very slowly, wrote down upon the scrap of paper what was presumably a rough draft of what she was going to enter in the will. Then she copied it into the document even yet more slowly, dwelling, as it seemed, upon every letter. Her

hand must have grown feeble before her brain, or else, like all testators of the fussy sort who look on will-making as a solemn function, she could not bring herself to let a paltry minute settle the destination of five-and-twenty thousand pounds. I have known men and women who would have made the labour of writing the two or three needful words last the better part of a day.

She thrust the scrap of paper on which she had made her first memorandum under her pillow, and then carefully folded the will itself so that I could see nothing without deliberately breaking my word. Dr. Kirwan and myself were appointed executors; and the execution of the will was witnessed by the nurse and a neighbour. There was certainly nothing remarkable about Miss Molloy's Will so far but the excessive care she had taken that its principal provision should not even be guessed at until she died.

Nor did Miss Molloy die quite so soon as everybody had expected. The Count and the Major, finding a protracted stay at the Old Swan beyond their means, had parted, deadly enemies—all the more deadly because each inspired the other with a feeling of mortal terror. I am very much afraid that both Mrs. Stedl and Mrs. O'Birn had to bear, at her husband's hands, the burden of punishment for the sins of her brother-in-law. But, however that may be, the day came at last when I heard from Dr. Kirwan the long-expected news that my client, Miss Bridgita Molloy, was alive no more.

'She couldn't have lasted another week,' said he. 'But, all the same, I might have kept her going for another day or two, with care. Would you believe it, but

the obstinate old lady, only the night before last, gave her nurse the slip, and, weak as she was, went all over the house to see if everything was in order ! Death was a relief to her, and she was a queer old lady in some ways—and the worst patient in all the town—but I'm sorry she's gone.'

And that, I am afraid, was the only note of honest mourning which Miss Molloy, with all her many virtues and her singularly few weaknesses, was privileged to receive. She had always hidden her good qualities out of public sight; and hardness of manner, like charity, covers a great deal.

To the last she had stuck to her will. It was found under her pillow when she died, sealed up in a large blue envelope, and indorsed '*My Will—B. M.*' I own it was with some curiosity that I opened it; for she had made such a mystery of what should have been a very simple piece of business, that I had some misgivings lest she should have disinherited niece and nephew alike, and made her dog Dash or some Anti-Matrimonial Society her residuary legatee. My own sympathies were with Miss Lucis; my wife's with Lieutenant Ferentz Steldl. That was a little matter of human nature; as a matter of reason, we felt that they had equal claims, and that twenty-five thousand pounds would have borne equal partition very well.

So I broke open the envelope, unfolded the will, and read :

' And all the residue of my property, whether real or personal, I give, bequeath, and devise to G P X D N W M D Y B D O V J W D M I H T I D E X E.'

III.

THAT was the bequest—as clear to the sight as it was dark to the mind. Had I been mistaken, and had Miss Molloy been insane after all? If that were so, every penny of the five-and-twenty thousand pounds would have to be divided between the Count and the Major as the husbands of her next of kin. No, surely *that* insanity was impossible.

I twisted the document up and down, and round and round. Those letters still obstinately remained as they were; the alphabet, at any rate, had gone mad, unless it was I who had gone insane. I needed some evidence of my own senses, and carried the will straight to my co-executor, Dr. Kirwan.

'She was an odd old lady,' said he at last. 'But I'll bear witness in any court you like that she was as sane as anybody that ever made a will.'

'But what's to be done?'

'Ah, what indeed? What's the effect of this will, as it stands?'

'I'm just hanged if I know. The will's otherwise without a flaw. And in all my practice, and all my reading too, I never heard of the alphabet's being made a residuary legatee. I don't like to say, without consideration, that there's no principle a court of equity would go upon; but I don't know of one. I don't see even how it would come within the doctrine of *Cy Pres*.'

'What's that?'

'Why, that when the conditions of a gift can't be literally carried out, the Court of Chancery will decree some method conformable to the general object, and following the intentions of the donor as nearly as possible.'

'Then,' said Dr. Kirwan, 'I should say the Court would apply

the estate to the foundation of a college for the study of conundrums. But—holloa, Lake, here's something else dropped out of the envelope; perhaps it's the answer. It's a letter addressed to you.'

That, also, was sealed. When I opened it, I found only these words:

'If you are puzzled, lift up the carpet in the drawing-room in the corner between the fireplace and window, under the chiffonier.—B. M.'

'Aha!' said the doctor. 'A cipher, and the key. Let's go at once, and see. But—how would that affect the will?'

'It is a most ridiculous thing to have done,' I said, really angry and annoyed. 'I wish to Heaven I had known that *that* was what she was up to. I'm afraid there may be trouble.'

'Won't a will in cipher be allowed?'

'I hope so. The Court of Chancery will rectify a clear mistake or omission in a will, if it is apparent on the face of the will. And even parol evidence will be admitted in case of mistake in the name or description of a legatee. We shall have better than parol evidence in a written key; and the mistake of naming and describing the legatee, whoever he or she may be, by G P X, and so forth, is as apparent on the face of the will as a misdescription can possibly be. The key will, I hope, be evidence enough to show what Miss Molloy intended. But I'm sadly afraid that into Chancery it will have to go, and our friends the Count and the Major will have a few words to say to it if it once gets there. Of anything really wrong I'm not afraid; but of trouble I am. I'll have a good read in Jarman when I get home. But now for the drawing-room corner.'

We went together straight to the house of the late Miss Molloy, and, according to our instructions, turned up the carpet in the corner of the drawing-room. Sure enough we found another sealed note addressed to me.

'Look,' we read, '*at page 173 in the second volume of Gibbon's "Decline and Fall."* It is on a shelf in the breakfast-room.—B. M.'

I was too vexed at all this folly and mystification to smile.

'By Jupiter!' exclaimed the doctor, 'this accounts for that midnight ramble over her house just before she died. She was writing these notes and hiding them. Poor old lady—it's not an uncommon thing, though, for people on their deathbeds to fancy themselves surrounded by spies and enemies. It isn't lunacy, though, eh?'

'But it's the cause of lunacy in others,' grumbled I. 'Well, now for Gibbon.'

And there, exactly on page 173 of volume ii., was yet a third sealed note for me. And this ran:

'Key behind wainscot three inches towards cupboard from dressing-room window.—B. M.'

'At last!' said I. 'I was afraid we were going to be sent up all the chimneys before we'd done.'

'By Jupiter, Lake, just think what would have happened if there'd been one link missing; if one of these pillar-to-post notes had been lost or gone out of the way!'

'It's too terrible a chance to talk of. It would have cost one of those young people near twelve hundred a year. Come, here's the dressing-room; let's be quick and have done with the whole thing.'

'All right; here's a loose board, just where we were told to go. Come, out with you! Hold a match

down, this is rather a dark hole. There—and here's—holloa !

Dr. Kirwan pulled out a fragment of an envelope to which the red sealing-wax still clung, and on which I could read a part of my own name. There were also some odds and ends of *blank* paper scattered round. We pulled out all that was there. Alas, the fate of the key was only too plainly to be learned from the torn and half-eaten scraps of envelope and note-paper we found.

A scuttering and scrambling behind the wainscot mocked us with the certainty that the Mice had swallowed the Key !

IV.

WHAT was to be done now ! The mice alone knew to whom Miss Bridgita Molloy's money belonged. Try to realise the circumstances now, as I had to realise them then. There was a will—a good will—and yet a will of which all the Equity lawyers on earth would be unable to make head or tail. And not one breath or sign of her intentions had Miss Molloy let fall even to Dr. Kirwan or to me. And there were the Count and the Major waiting for their prey.

The letters of the alphabet took to waltzing with the multiplication table in my dreams. I did not know what to do. I got a box of ivory letters and tried all sorts of anagrams, but could make nothing out of five-and-twenty letters, with only four vowels among them, and with so many *s*'s and *x*'s. I proved the will in fear and trembling, fully expecting that the question of the soundness of the mind of the testatrix would be immediately raised by one or both of her brothers-in-law, who had of

course been made aware of the contents, and were in possession of those letters without meaning. But, strange to say, no steps were taken whatever. It was not for a week, at least, after the will had been proved that I received a visit from Steldl the elder, accompanied by a dapper and smartly dressed young man, whom he introduced to me as Mr. Withers, from the office of Withers & King. I supposed he was the legal adviser of the Steldl claim.

'You shall wonder, Mr. Lake,' said the Count, 'why I not think Miss Molloy what you call mad woman. Not at all. I think of that once ; but then that give half the money to that vermin, Fitzgerald O'Birn, who shall lose it in every vile way. I say it shall be a good will. I take advice, I ; and I demand you pay all what shall be left to my son, Ferentz Steldl—'

'Wait a bit,' said I. 'He has already received his legacy of a thousand pounds.'

'Bah ! what shall be one thousand pound ! He is what you call Residuary Legatee of Miss Molloy.'

'I wish he were, with all my heart ! But we must go to Chancery. There's nothing else to be done.'

'No. He shall not go in Chancery. He shall have his right and his due. I am his father, Monsieur.'

'When you can read those confounded letters into Ferentz Steldl, I'll pay him every penny with all my heart, and take the consequences ; but not a minute before.'

'Very good, Mr. Lake. Then I shall read them into Ferentz Steldl, and without magic ; and then you shall pay. Now, Mr. Withers, if you please.'

'Mr. Withers is your solicitor, I presume'

'I have not the honour,' said Mr. Withers glibly, 'to be in the profession—in *your* profession, sir, that is to say. We are a firm of professional experts, sir. We practise the science of autography, and we collect and deal in the autograph letters of celebrated historical persons. Naturally our business has occasionally included the branch of cryptography—of the construction and solution of ciphers, which, though requiring a certain special aptitude as well as experience, is not so difficult as laymen might suppose, and is as certain in its results as arithmetic itself—beautifully certain, sir. Our friend Mr. Steldl has applied to me for the missing key of this little puzzle, and it took me barely half an hour's study to find.'

'You mean you can read this jumble into sense?' asked I. 'You must be a clever fellow, Mr. Withers. How am I to know it isn't guess-work? The correctness of your reading will have to be proved, you see.'

'Up to the hilt, sir. The beauty of a cipher, or cryptograph, is that, if you once hit on the right key, it can only mean just that one thing—no doubt, no ambiguity. And as the discovery of the key is a logical process, and as no cipher can possibly have more than one key, why, sir, *solvitur ambulando*—the result is proved by the process, sir; or rather, result and process prove one another.'

'Then I must have your process, if you please.'

'To be sure. No patent. Anybody can do it. This cipher, sir, is even absurdly simple. Did you ever read the *Gold Bug* of Edgar Allan Poe? No! That's a pity, because I shall have to explain from the beginning. I

have rather a contempt for that story—the cipher he makes his hero discover would have been found out by a child in half the time. And this cipher before us is of precisely the same kind—the very simplest form of cipher known.'

'Well?'

'A person like Miss Molloy, presumably ignorant of the beautiful science of cryptography, would be almost certain to adopt the plan of making one letter do duty for another. Of course she has left no spaces between her words. Now, you know that the commonest English letter is *e*; so that, ten to one, the commonest letter in the cipher will represent *e*. That letter is *d*. It comes no fewer than five times in the twenty-five. So, ten to one, *d* stands for *e*. You perceive?'

'At any rate, I follow, so far.'

'Very good, sir. Now look at the cipher well, and keep it before your eyes. We'll assume for the moment that *d* may mean *e*; and if *d* means *e*, it's likely enough *a* would be *b*, *b* would be *c*, and so on, and so on, taking the letter following. Let's try that dodge with *m*, because there's more than one *m*, and because *n* (which it ought to stand for) is a commonish sort of letter. Very well. Putting *e* for *d* and *a* for *m* and dots for the other letters, we get, . . . *e . . . ne . . . e . . . en . . . e . . .*

Now, Mr. Lake, the question, as I understand it, is—Did Miss Molloy leave her money to Lucis Bridgita O'Birn, or to Ferentz Steldl? Assuming that one of those *e*'s must fall into where the name of the legatee must come, it will strike you at once that there isn't one single *e* in the *lady*'s name. It will also strike you that the young gentleman is a *nephew*, and that we've got already *ne*—coming together. Let's

chance it. Let's write *nephew* right out, and see if we get sense that way. It'll come like this, putting *p* for *y*, *h* for *b*, *w* for *o*:
 . . . *e . . nephew . . . en . . . e . . .*
 Now, what strikes you next, sir?
 'Nothing whatever, Mr. Withers. Nothing at all.'

'No! I'm surprised. Doesn't it strike you that *en* comes in Ferentz; that the cipher and the name of Steldl both end in a letter between a pair of letters—*xxx: ldl?* A most remarkable hint, indeed; for it interferes with no former assumption—*z* would mean *l*: *x* would mean *d*. Now look how it reads:

. . . *e . r nephew f . rentz steldl*

Only one thing bothers me. Where the dot comes now in *f . rentz* there ought to be a *d* to represent an *e*. In reality there's a *j*. But that's a trifle; doubtless a clerical error. The whole thing's as plain as a pikestaff. Substituting letter for letter, and never mixing them, here you are:

*my dear nephew Ferentz Steldl,
 and there you are!*

I was certainly surprised at the fellow's ingenuity. Except for that missing *e*, the process was without a flaw; and when we see a logical and faultless process arriving at a probable conclusion, what are we to say? And, by Jove! Miss Molloy *had made a particular point of spelling Ferentz, Firentz—with an i*. Look back at the draft of the will, and see. That was downright proof, if any was needed; the *j* in the cipher, hitherto unaccounted for, would be *i*. The very simple little process had all the air of a miracle to me. I knew nothing then of the far greater marvels wrought by antiquarians in rougher and larger fields, or I should, perhaps, have been less surprised.

'It is read, Monsieur,' said Steldl *père*, with a bow.

I was a little sorry for Miss Lucis; but I didn't grudge her cousin his good luck, and I was intensely relieved. I was thinking of the effect of all this as evidence, Steldl was looking at me in dignified triumph, Mr. Withers was regarding his success with artistic pride, when my clerk brought in a card—*Major Fitzgerald O'Birn*.

I thought best to have everything out and over then and there; so, without considering the presence of his brother-in-law and enemy, I had him ushered in.

'Good-dee to ye, Mr. Lake,' said he, without deigning to notice, or even to see, Mr. Steldl, who, for his part, threw a double dose of benignity into his smile. 'I suppose ye've been wonderin' why I didn't go in for provin' poor Miss Biddy *non compos*—wake in the top, ye know. As if I'd consent to go halves with a dirthy, mane, intriguing baste of a fellow that she'd cut off with a shilling with her own hand! All or none—that's the war-cry of the O'Birns! So I've just dropped in, on my wee, to ask ye for that twenty-five thousand that's due to Lucis, my daughter; and I'll take it hot with—I mane short, if ye please. Or, if ye haven't it all in your pocket, a thrifle on account 'll do for to-dee.'

'I'm sorry for Miss O'Birn,' said I. 'But—she's had her thousand pounds—'

'—her thousand pounds! I wouldn't give sixpence for a beggarly thousand pounds. 'Tis an insult to spake to a gentleman of such a sum.'

'Her thousand pounds, and—I'm afraid—this gentleman, Mr. Withers, will explain—there is no longer any doubt of Miss Molloy's intentions. Lieutenant Steldl is residuary legatee.'

'An' who's Mr. Withers? Is

it in a conspiracy ye'll be, with your heads as thick together as pays in one shell? Why, 'tis plain than blazes that *gpx* stands for Lucis O'Birn. What do ye see to that, sir, eh?

'I'm afraid it doesn't,' said I.

'You're a pretty fellow for a lawyer! But I suppose ye'll have to believe what's proved. Higgins, ye're wanted!' shouted he.

He too, it seemed, had brought a friend with him—a little, pinched, shabby, elderly man, with red squinting eyes.

'I'll inthrouce ye to me friend Higgins—a gentleman and a scholar, that'll rade ye off Hebrew into Chinese for a glass of punch, an' back into Hebrew for two. Faith, I'd like ye to find a question that Higgins wouldn't answer ye off-hand. Says I to him, "Higgins, what does *gpx* spell?" An' says he, "Just Lucis O'Birn."'

A smile of amused contempt came into the face of smart Mr. Withers.

'An expert?' asked he.

'An' pray who may *you* be, sir?' asked Major O'Birn. 'D'ye mane to tell me ye haven't heard of Higgins—that ought to be a docthor of divinity and a member of Parlimint, and could see ye undher the teebble whenever ye please? Having thus annihilated Mr. Withers, 'Higgins, do your duty,' said he.

'There's nothing in it—nothing in it at all,' said Mr. Higgins, in a queer squeak, and in a shuffling sort of tone. 'What's the difficulty in reading that cipher I am at a loss to conceive. Do you mean to tell me that there is anybody on earth, except Major O'Birn, who has found the slightest difficulty in reading what couldn't puzzle, for more than half a second, anybody but a born fool?'

'You are pleased to be compli-

mentary, Mr. Higgins,' said I. 'Mr. Withers, as an expert, assures us that a cipher can only be read in one way.'

'It didn't want an expert to tell you that,' said Mr. Higgins testily. 'Of course you can only read a cipher in one way. How can one set of symbols stand for two different sets of words?'

'Then you will agree with Mr. Withers?'

'No doubt. If Mr. Withers has read the cipher he will agree with me. A cipher is made to a particular key, and it can't be fitted with two. When old women make ciphers, they mostly change the letters by counting forwards or backwards. So first I counted one forwards, and made *g* mean *h*; that came to nothing. Then two forwards, and made *g* mean *i*; nothing again. *J*—no. *K*—no. Then I tried the fifth letter forwards—*l*. According to that rule, *g* would be *l*: *p* would be *u*: *x* (making *a* follow *z*) would be *c*. Next comes *d*, which would be *i*: then *n*, which would be *s*—the true letter being always the fifth letter from the cipher forwards. Follow it out, gentlemen, and see for yourselves.'

I did as he bade me. And the cipher read, letter by letter, as follows, with the peculiar spelling of the name of the testatrix and all:

GPXDN WMDYBDGV JWDMI HT
LUCIS BRIDGITA OBIEN MY
IDXXZ.
NIECE.

There was no more doubt that the cipher was this than it was *My dear nephew, Firentz Steldl*. It meant both equally, and both at the same time!

I put it to every cryptologist in the world, is it within the bounds of credibility that a cipher of twenty-five letters should be read-

able in two exactly opposite and inconsistent ways, and that its two irreconcilable solutions should be gained by following two simple principles, both equally obvious and equally sound ! Incredible—nay, impossible ! will be the unanimous answer. And yet the impossible, by a marvellous chain of coincidences, was effected in that will of Miss Molloy. She could not intentionally have brought about such a result, even if she had tried. The *i* for the *e* in Ferentz, or rather Firentz, left no room for doubt that Withers's solution was true. On the other hand, the peculiar spelling of Bridgita was an unanswerable argument in favour of Mr. Higgins. Withers had started on the principle which has amused so many readers of Edgar Poe, and is in itself a perfectly true and sound one. Higgins had started on the principle favoured by simpletons who correspond in cipher in the agony columns, and imagine that their silly secrets are not open to anybody who takes five minutes' trouble to read them.

What was to be done—now ?

Clearly the situation was not realised by either of the fathers of the rival legatees. But a gloom came over the face of Mr. Withers. He took up the paper on which Mr. Higgins had written his solution, and examined it intently.

'No sane woman would have used such a simple cipher as that,' said he. 'It is just the solution that would satisfy an amateur.'

'True,' said Mr. Higgins, with a slight sneer. 'Jurymen are in the position of amateurs, I believe, and judges too.'

'A cipher can't have two solutions,' said Mr. Withers, throwing the paper down.

'True again,' said Mr. Higgins. 'Happily for Miss O'Birn.'

'Have you studied cryptology

as a science, Mr. Higgins ?' asked Mr. Withers, with a wild effort at elaborate courtesy.

'I'm not such an ass,' said Mr. Higgins, with no pretence of courtesy at all. 'I'd as soon set up a science of handwriting as a science of whims.'

'You are insulting, sir ! There *is* a science of handwriting—ay, and of character in handwriting ; and I shouldn't like to write like you, judging from what it's like to be.'

'I always make it a point of insulting quacks and humbugs,' said Mr. Higgins. 'It's the first duty of man. I've read that cipher in the way that would satisfy anybody but an expert, and there's an end.'

'Whom do you call quack, sir ? Let me tell you that when a man deliberately insults my science, I—I—feel it my duty to knock him down.'

'Gentlemen—gentlemen !' I cried out, 'you have both been very clever—a great deal too clever for me. I would gladly have accepted either of your readings, Heaven knows. But I can't accept both ; and both your reasons are so admirable that I can't accept either. And what's worse, it's your arguments, not your assertions, that will have to go into Chancery ; and into Chancery we must all go. Yes, there's no help for it now ; and, once in, Heaven alone knows when we shall get out again.'

'I object to the law on principle ; I shall have nothing to do with law,' said Steldl ; and I have no doubt but he had excellent reasons for the only principle I ever heard of his having. 'I bring my expert ; you are satisfied. I demand twenty-five thousand pounds for my son.'

'I despise the law,' shouted the Major. 'An Irish gentleman

doesn't mix up with pettifogging rascals. I wouldn't touch the dirty thing with the end of an old boot. 'Tis as clear as day—Lucia Bridgita O'Birn.'

'It must be compromise, or—Chancery,' said I. 'Have it as you will.'

'Compromise—with *him*?' said Steldl, pointing to the Major with his thumb. 'Not one penny shall he rob my son.'

'Compromise—with a Steldl?' said the Major, in his turn. 'Maybe with old Nick I would; for old Nick's a gentleman,' added he.

And there was the deadest lock I ever heard of since I was born! No Lord Chancellor ever drew up a will that most clearly meant two opposite and irreconcilable things.

And here, alas, is the end of this story, so far as I am concerned. I say alas in the conventional spirit of a lawyer (as he is supposed to be); for students of knotty points of Equity may search the Chancery reports in vain for any case bearing the name of Molloy, Lake, Steldl, or O'Birn. The effect of a will written in a cipher which can be read in two ways remains undecided to the present hour; and will, unless things repeat themselves in the most incredible way, remain undecided for evermore. The united wisdom of the House of Lords—for it must have got even there at last—was never occupied with investigating the secret thoughts of Miss Molloy.

I really regret, sometimes—quite independently of the advantage that would have accrued to my own banking account—that I did not, in the interests of the profession, apply to the Court instantly on behalf of myself and my co-executor. A certain utterly

ridiculous unwillingness to throw Miss Molloy's property into the very Maelstrom of litigation led me to put off the evil day as long as possible. For I could not help remembering that if, by any chance, the will should at last be set aside altogether for want of anybody's having brains enough to make head or tail of it, or for want of inherent perspicuity, or for any other sufficient reason, the Count and the Major must divide as next of kin, in right of their wives. And that would be worse for the property than a hundred Chanceries of the good old Eldon days. They, in their determination to have all or nothing, were no more eager to push matters to an extremity than I. And so, I verily believe, should we have been standing at this triangular deadlock at the present hour, had not the delay itself brought about a most natural solution in the most natural way in the world. 'When in doubt, do nothing,' I constantly find to be the wisest maxim that ever was made.

My relief, at the time, hardly equalled my surprise. But, considering that Mrs. Steldl and Mrs. O'Birn had never quarrelled—considering that they had met again—considering what sort of young people their son and their daughter were—I must own that I was an ass to feel surprised on learning of the marriage of Lieutenant Steldl to Lucia Bridgita O'Birn. The history of the Montagues and the Capulets does not stand alone in the effect of the feuds of the old upon the hearts of the young. But this is no part of my story. Enough that *her* claims became *his*, while *his* remained his own—and therefore *her* own, too. And if two elderly rascals were kept in somewhat disreputable clover for the

rest of their days, and if two executors were content to run a little safe risk in making things comfortable all round for everybody, themselves included, and if two cryptologists remained irreconcilable foes, and if two young people became happy in their own peculiar way, and if the

Court was deprived of a big cause, and the profession of the bulk of the property of Miss Molloy—well, the fault is mainly my own. I profess only to tell the story, not to solve the mystery, of Miss Molloy's most Remarkable Will.

I COULDN'T.

(See the Illustration.)

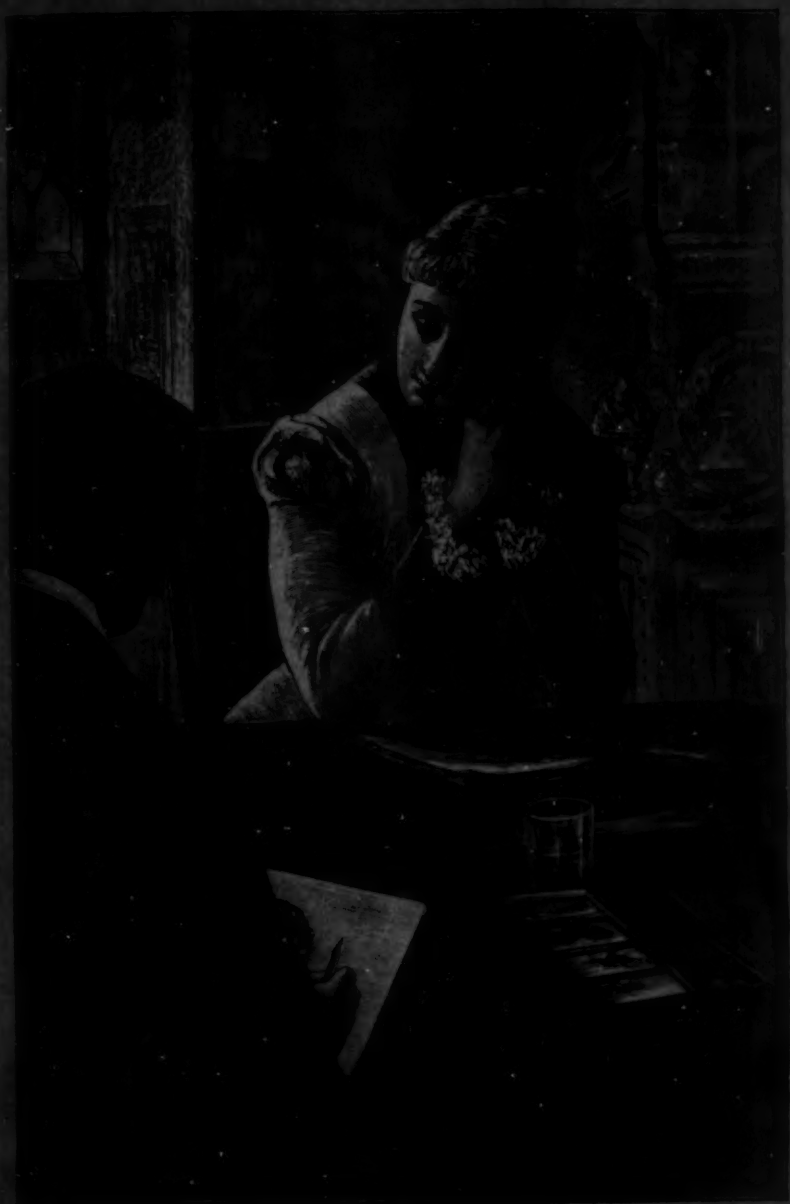
ALAS, I'm in such sad disgrace !
I tried to pencil off her face,
But couldn't.

She kindly sat an hour the while,
And archly faced me with a smile,
She shouldn't.

Love took the fallen pencil tip,
And gave a charm to cheek and lip,
He shouldn't.

I caught her roguish smile again,—
To snatch a kiss could I refrain ?
I couldn't!

A. R.



I COULDN'T.
See the Veron.

IRISH CHARACTERISTICS.

THERE is some truth in the saying that the easiest way to cure Irish discontent would be to fill up St. George's Channel; and perhaps the proposal now made to connect Tor Point with the Mull of Cantyre may be a step in the right direction. The insular position of Ireland leads the inhabitants to think that they ought to be

'A nation proudly independent,'

and to regard the English as foreigners who hold them in subjection. But I am not about to discuss this remedial measure, nor the more drastic one of dipping the country under the sea, though I believe they would be found more effectual and practical than most of the schemes at present under consideration.

Nature has been a cruel step-mother to our sister isle. She has given her a poor soil, unprofitable ores, and weeping skies. As a compensation for all this, and as if in mockery, she has presented her with—a harp. Erin may touch her emblematic chords and waken the wild music of romance. She may gaze on sunsets mellow with fruity tints, and on mountains, lakes, and rivers framed in bows of prismatic light. Her sons and daughters have sympathetic voices and artistic skill. Nor has Melancholy marked them for her own. Indeed, their light-heartedness in adversity is one of their best qualities; and their humour, though often excellent, is occasionally so erratic as to lead some to think, when a claim is made for another university, that a cap and bells would suit most

of them better than a cap and gown.

All classes in Ireland are fond of grandeur and circumstance; and the establishment of a Royal residence there would have a most beneficial effect. During the stay of the Duke of Connaught in the country, he was, as usual, very affable, and won golden opinions among rich and poor. I was told that one day when he was waiting at the door of an hotel, a tatterdemalion came up to him, and, with native assurance, called out,

'Welcome to Ireland, your Royal Highness! I hope I see your Royal Highness well.'

'Quite well. I am much obliged to you,' replied the Duke.

'And your Royal mother the Queen?' continued the man. 'I hope she is also enjoying good health.'

'Yes, thank you,' returned the Duke; 'the Queen is very well.'

'I'm glad to hear it, your Royal Highness. And how are your Royal brothers?'

'Get along there, fellow!' said one of the aide-de-camps, who happened to come up at that moment.

'What are you interfering with me for, sir?' retorted the tatterdemalion, much affronted. 'Don't you see that I'm holding a conversation with his Royal Highness?'

The Irish, then, are an imaginative people; but unfortunately the mental productions of the country are not exclusively gay and poetic. There is something in the soil and climate that breeds irritability

and pugnacity. This does not come from race; for there is a great mixture of descent in the country, and a large proportion are of English origin. Nor does it arise from legislation; for under all rulers, native or English, Conservative or Liberal, Ireland has been in a disturbed state. No doubt severe laws were passed against Irish Romanists in bygone centuries; but their co-religionists in England, who also suffered, are not now forming conspiracies and defending themselves before courts of justice. We hear much of the penal codes of former times, but little of the offences which led to their enactment. Turn the matter over how you please, you will still find turbulence to be an indigenous plant in the soil. Every country has its own fauna and flora; its own characteristics in the form and feature and mind of its inhabitants. Every country has its own language; and Irishmen do not speak any more than they think, like Englishmen.

It has become the fashion to say that Ireland has suffered from its manufactures having been destroyed by England in past times. But industries continue to die out there now, because of the want of a quiet docile population. A large flax factory was established a few years ago by some enterprising men in the south of Ireland; but it had soon to be closed. I was told: 'The children do not work here as they do in the north; and, as soon as their labour becomes of the least value, their parents come and threaten to take them away unless their wages are raised.' Moreover, capitalists are not inclined to invest their money where there is neither coal nor iron, and where, if they dismiss any of their hands, they are in danger of having their buildings

burnt or their machinery destroyed.

Given the character, what is the life? Necessarily the Irish are poor. The peasantry spend much of their time in gossiping, smoking, card-playing, and in attending fairs, weddings, wakes, and funerals—the latter are often a mile long. The description one of them gives of himself is not inaccurate:

'I'm not very much given to work,
It was never the way with the Bradys;
But I'd make a most excellent Turk,
For I'm fond of tobacco and ladies.'

I cannot say whether the true Moslem is quite so fond of porter and whisky. But the people are forward enough in attending religious festivals; and there are men ready to encourage them in all sorts of ridiculous superstitions. I know a substantial farmer who is very particular about having his cattle blessed every year by the priest, and another who drives them on Midsummer's-eve between fires—a remnant apparently of fire-worship. On one occasion I ventured to ask a pretty girl with dark wavy hair and lovely violet eyes, but without any shoes or stockings, or indeed much petticoats, why, instead of purchasing what was so necessary, she parted with all her money to the priest. But I soon found that argument and advice were of no avail, her ready answer being, 'Shure, an' what could I do better with it than give it to the Church?'

'Well, Norah,' I replied, 'your thoughts are heavenly; may you be blessed in your deed! You have more faith than I in the absolution of priests and the prayers of saints. I remember an old Frenchwoman once telling me that I did not believe in Heaven because I said I had doubts about the miracle at La Salette.'

'It was thure for her,' she returned; 'and I should not be surprised if you did not believe there was such a thing as a Providence when you don't believe that there is such a thing as a Virgin.'

If the people are willing, the priests are pressing, and resort to various bold devices to increase their revenues. I heard of one man stationing himself with the plate a little way inside the chapel-door, and announcing to the congregation in a stentorian voice the amount which each contributor deposited; thus, 'Bartholomew Connell, half-a-crown; Jeremiah Murphy, sixpence.' Sometimes there is an argument and controversy with the donor. I heard of an occasion when two burly priests placed themselves in the doorway with their plates, and made such a higgling and obstruction that at last the faithful outside became impatient, manned a rush, knocked over their spiritual teachers, and literally entered the kingdom of heaven by violence.

Early marriages are a prolific source of misery in Ireland, followed as they invariably are by a long tail of children. There is another pauperising custom: when a farmer has saved a little money, instead of employing it in his business or leaving the bulk of it to his eldest son, he divides it equally during his lifetime among his children. The result is that the country is full of young fellows looking out to make their fortunes by marriage, the end of which shows the disastrous folly of such enterprises. The great part of the little portion thus obtained is consumed on the wedding festivities, and a large share, generally about ten per cent, goes to the priest, with whom a bargain must be struck. The clergy, who levy most of their money in this way, consider it a matter both of

duty and profit to encourage these unions, and I remember hearing one of them tell the people in his sermon 'to marry young, and not to put it off till they were old, when they would be cawing at one another like two cats in a crib.' The respect which the Irish have for their priests does not prevent them from enjoying a joke at their expense. I remember hearing an instance of a poor girl going to a priest to ask him to unite her to the boy of her choice. The holy man demanded two sovereigns for the accommodation. The girl pleaded hard that she had not so much money; but he was inexorable: two sovereigns he must have. She was leaving the house in the greatest despondency, when her eye lighted on the priest's cloak hanging on a peg in the hall. A bright thought occurred to her quick Irish mind: she took it down and vanished. Half an hour later she returned with the money, accompanied by her beloved Pat. The priest was now all smiles, performed the service with great goodwill, and bestowed on the happy couple a hearty blessing; and, as they left the church, Kathleen dropped a curtsy, thanked him for his kindness, and presented him with the pawn-ticket that he might recover his cloak.

The priests are very strict about confession in Ireland, and I fancy some of them—for there are merry fellows among them—have occasionally a good laugh when alone together over the secrets divulged to them. Some people who have very tender consciences make full and elaborate confessions, extending them into minute details about all their peccadilloes and even about every little impertinence of thought which has obtruded itself upon them; but I imagine that there is a large class who, while

making a pretty fair show in the confessional, carefully keep to themselves anything which might entail a heavy penance. I knew a short time since an old gentleman who was very particular in this matter. Hearing that a drunken blacksmith had died in a village on his property, he was much perturbed, and inquired anxiously whether at the last he had received the ministrations of a priest. On being assured that he had, he exclaimed with great relief, 'O, well, I am glad to hear that. It's all right with the poor devil.'

The convenient manner in which priests modify the penalties for offences is exemplified in the following story. A poor man came to confession, and what he had to tell was that he had stolen a pig.

'Was it a good pig?' inquired the parish priest.

'Egad, your rivrence, it was an illigant cratur.'

'Did it belong to a rich man or a poor one?'

'O, a very rich man, your rivrence.'

'Well, well, that makes a difference. It is not of much consequence; he could afford to lose it. You need only say a few "Ave Marias" and "Pater nosters" for a week.'

'Thanks, your rivrence; I'll do that.'

'By the way, Pat,' said the priest, as he was going out, 'whom did the pig belong to?'

'Belong to, did you say? Shure, didn't it belong to your rivrence?'

Much has been said about the 'earth hunger' of the Irish, but the truth is that they want farms because they have a money value. Lately, when prices fell, their desire for land wonderfully diminished; in short, it was difficult to obtain any offers for it. In general, when a farm is to let, there

are plenty of men coming forward with capital to take it—a fact which proves that in a large number of cases the rents are not so high as to prevent accumulation. A stranger would be much deceived by the appearance of many of the tenants. I have now before my mind a man who looked like a dirty ragged beggar. The earthen floor of his cabin was in a state of mud, owing to the door being left open to admit daylight, and the chifionier was filled with a family of fowls who made the parlour their passage-room to the farmyard. Outside, in front, the ground was a deep mass of wet straw and manure, across which the barefooted ladies of the establishment were constantly passing to and fro into the house, making the muddy floor more grimy and odoriferous. But yet this man, whom you would not have supposed to be worth five pounds, gave each of his daughters a marriage portion of five hundred.

It is difficult to talk much and well, and the Irish seldom think twice before they speak. To judge from their utterances you might think the atmosphere was full of murder. Not only farmers, but even some professional men, think nothing of saying that this or that landlord should be shot. We feel inclined to call out, as the frogs in the fable did to the boys who were stoning them, 'Remember what is pay to you is death to us.' I suppose that there is scarcely one proprietor in Ireland who has not been denounced by some person and received threatening letters. But it is mostly 'words, words,' and comes from that wind on the brain from which the Irish proverbially suffer. In some cases the menaces are carried out; and no doubt at present, if unpopular landlords were not armed and guarded, and if tenants could hold

their guns straight, we should have greater destruction. But nevertheless the majority of the so-called 'tyrants' move about without being in much fear or danger. Never was there a nation between whose words and actions there was so wide a discrepancy. A gentleman, now a celebrated Land League orator, once said to me, 'Nobody tells the truth in Ireland; I never do;' and I quote his observation not only to show the amount of false representation in the country, but also of thoughtless assertion. Many an Irish tenant flatters his landlord to his face and abuses him behind his back, but means neither one nor the other, but simply wishes he could avoid paying his rent. He considers that to evict him would be a crime, but experience shows that he would not be sorry that his neighbour was dispossessed if he could get the farm a bargain; sometimes in his hurry he even bids more than the value, and causes loss to himself and his landlord.

I have formed these opinions from a long acquaintance with Ireland, and from what I have heard from others, and merely add the following as an illustration of the character of some of the peasantry:

Since the Land League have commenced their operations I have received several letters full of threats and insults. No member of our family ever had one previously. We occasionally give small presents of money to the poorer tenants, and sent one lately to a man who farms about twenty acres of land. He was profuse in his thanks, spoke of the kindness of his 'noble landlord,' was especially grateful for some seed potatoes, and for some money advanced to him to sow his land. As I had in writing gently observed that he had not paid his rent, he went on to say that a few days previously

his wife had gone to our agent about some rates; and the same night, horrible to relate, a knocking was heard at his window, and on looking out they saw fifteen men with blackened faces, who asked them if they had paid their rent, and why his wife went to see the agent. On receiving an explanation of the supposed offence the gang of ruffians departed. Under these trying circumstances he said he was afraid to pay his rent, but would cheerfully do so 'when the present agitation is over,' which no doubt he hopes will be some time off. He concluded by wishing us 'a merry Christmas and a happy new year.' But the most remarkable thing of the whole was, that the handwriting was indubitably the same as that of the threatening letters!

I know this man well, and believe that he was born on the property. He is typical of a class, and I will venture to say that there never was an Englishman at all like him. At first sight you would take him for a mixture of dirt and ignorance; next, you would regard him as a simple-minded honest man; finally, you would conclude that he was a tangled web of intelligence, folly, and cajolery. He is not uneducated; his letters are long, well written, and full of ingenious fictions. In the one above mentioned there was scarcely a word of truth, except perhaps the subscription, 'From your unworthy tenant.' In appearance he belongs to the older generation of the Irish, having hard quaint features and a knowing twinkle of eye. With his battered hat slouched on one side, he would make a capital sketch for a comic paper, and there is something genial and good-humoured about his expression which makes you half forget that he is a rascal.

Nothing can be more unfortunate than the dependence of the Irish upon the 'lazy food' of a root which has become subject to disease. But the habit is as difficult to cure as the plant; for of what avail is it to offer a man a plate of porridge who has been accustomed to eat a stone of potatoes in the day, and who can swallow loaves like a clown in a pantomime? How will you fill up the void which he hates? And when we take into account the Irish character and the depressing influence of three unfavourable seasons, what a tempting field lay open for the work of ambitious and self-seeking agitators! The fervid imagination of the people pictures to itself all sorts of pleasant possibilities, and their sympathetic nature readily seconds the persuasions of high-flown oratory. There is no country so easily fanned into a flame, or whose prosperity depends so much upon the summary repression of lawlessness. The words of Carleton the novelist, himself the son of a small farmer, and naturally inclined to side with the peasantry, are worth recalling at the present day. He wrote during the 'tithe war' in the earlier half of this century: 'Never,' he says, 'has there been an instance of the virtues of a whole people being so debauched and contaminated by the teachings of unscrupulous agitators.' He adds that he has always been an anti-repealer, and that although some of the Young Irishers are his personal friends, 'no one knows better than they that I have always endeavoured to dissuade them from the madness of their course.'

It will have been observed that I consider the failings of the Irish

to be more their misfortune than their fault, and no people require greater protection against themselves. Were the plant transferred to a better soil, it would bear better fruit. When the English settle in Ireland they fall into the habits of the country; when the Irish emigrate they gradually become prosperous, and a great part of the progress in America is due to their activity. I am far from denying that they have good qualities; they are hospitable and capable of great affection, they are quick of apprehension, and enthusiastic in religious devotion. Equable, prudent, and law-abiding they are not, and what Dickens said of the ladies might be well applied to them: 'Bless those women, they never do anything by halves!'

The damp relaxing climate of the south and west of Ireland—for it is of those parts I am speaking—predisposes to slovenliness and improvidence. In atmospheric conditions Devonshire is somewhat similar, and the habits of the people are not very different. In both countries we find a want of cleanliness, thatched houses, and occasionally mud walls. Cider was formerly much drunk in the south of Ireland. Wages are low in Devonshire, but there is not the same restlessness among the population. I once asked a somewhat intelligent and very loquacious Irishman whether his countrymen were not thriftless.

'Very, sir,' he replied; 'it's because they're a nawble-minded people, sir. They're above thinking of thrifles. Shure, isn't it a grand thing for a man when he's 'atin' his breakfast not to know where he'll go for his dinner?'

THE SENIOR PARTNER.

By MRS. J. H. RIDDELL, AUTHOR OF 'GEORGE GEITH,' ETC.

CHAPTER IV.

RETROSPECTIVE.

WHEN Mrs. McCullagh died, the evil wrought by her weakness and folly did not die with her. Weeds as well as flowers can grow above a grave; other actions besides those of the just can spring up from the dust, and blossom and bear fruit a hundredfold.

Young though her first-born child was at the time of her death, he was quite old enough to understand his father and mother had never been of one mind; and that, while he was 'mamma's pet,' his brothers were regarded by his male parent with more favour than himself. The reason for this was not far to seek.

In the child Robert Mr. McCullagh beheld reproduced the beauty, the giddiness, the silliness, the perversity of the girl he had married all too rashly; and to this might be added the annoyance and mortification of seeing his own boy brought up to deride him, encouraged in petty deceit and constant dissimulation. From the time little Robert, or 'wee Rabbie,' as his father at that period affectionately termed him, was sufficiently advanced in life to sit on a footstool and 'behave himself prettily,' he had been accustomed to hear his mother and her gossips talking over all the trials of her wedded life, mourning that Mr. McCullagh was not like anybody else, and could not be remade into a similitude of any other person. There are always women to listen when

a woman speaks ill of her husband; there is no lack, in this world, of ladies only too ready to sympathise (!)—Heaven save the mark!—with those of their sex who have a fancy to expose a real or imaginary grievance to the public eye.

Over cups of tea and slices of thin bread-and-butter Mr. McCullagh's shortcomings were discussed, every fresh instance of what Mrs. McCullagh called his 'niggardliness' evoking a perfect chorus of pitying exclamations from her friends. All the evil the man did, or that his wife thought he did, which came to much the same thing, was enlarged upon and exhibited from every possible point of view. Whatever good actions he might have performed—and of a truth there was as much good as bad about Mr. McCullagh—were quietly left to languish in the shade. Amongst Mrs. McCullagh's friends chanced to be those whose English was none of the purest; but without a thought of their own sins in the way of pronunciation and grammar, they were unanimous in the opinion that Mr. McCullagh's Scotticisms were perfectly dreadful, and never wearied of asking his wife why she did not teach him better.

Mrs. McCullagh had neither the loyalty nor the good sense to say she loved her husband's 'braid Scotch' better than any Cockney accent. The time when she thought him perfection—listened for his footfall on the stairs, and felt the colour mantling her

cheeks at sound of his voice at the door—might never have been for any impression it had left behind: rather she delighted in exposing his infirmities and expatiating on his imperfections. Anything more ludicrous to an outsider than the imitations of Mr. McCullagh's mode of speech, in which the various ladies indulged, could scarcely be conceived. Those alone who have been privileged to hear an Irish-woman with a very broad accent mimicking the 'English tongue' can form some faint idea of what Mr. McCullagh's sharp incisive sentences and peculiar forms of expression became when reproduced by ladies in the habit of dropping their *h*'s, as the young person in the fairy tale dropped pearls, whenever they opened their mouths to speak, and of inserting them where *h* had no manner of right to be.

Had the school been a good one it is more than likely little Robert would not have learnt the lessons set before him with such rapidity as was the case; but being what it was, the child soon knew by heart every peculiarity of his father's speech and manner, and felt very sure his mother was the only person in the establishment to love and obey.

After a fashion, indeed, the boy had to obey the head of the household; but he only rendered the obedience of fear and of dislike. Whenever he could safely run counter to his father's wishes he did so; and in this course of conduct he was encouraged by his mother, whose whole existence seemed spent in considering how she could elude her husband's vigilance, and procure for herself, and give Robert share of, those little luxuries her soul loved, indulgence in which Mr. McCullagh

met either with active hostility or viewed with grim disapproval.

As regarded the training of children, Mr. McCullagh's ideas were Spartan. His own breakfast was always prefaced by a great basin of porridge, which he pronounced 'parritch' and spoke of as 'them'; and he conscientiously believed no one could grow up to be strong, wise, or happy who had not morning after morning partaken of a sufficient portion of Scotch oatmeal thus prepared. He had 'eaten them,' he said, 'for mony a year, and was glad to get them, and he did not know what his wife meant by turning up her nose at good victuals and setting her boy's stomach against them too. What serves me might serve him, I think,' added Mr. McCullagh; and there was a certain amount of reason in this remark, though Mrs. McCullagh utterly failed to see it.

After his mother's death the position of the boy Robert was, as may readily be conceived, none of the pleasantest. During her illness he had lived much in her room, sharing the dainties she could barely touch, listening to her murmuring complaints, doing very much what he pleased, and patted and extolled by visitors for his filial affection. The lad felt her loss most bitterly. Independent of the anguish all children experience when they are brought in contact with the angel who seems to them so terrible in its silence, so merciless in its strength, there was for this precocious child with the dark eyes and the curly hair a certain knowledge that when the coffin was carried downstairs the only friend he possessed in that house was leaving it forever. The child—for he was nothing more—sat down in a corner as if his heart would break; and as the days went on and his tears refused

to flow any longer, he began to mope about the rooms, haunting his late mother's bedchamber, and being enough, so declared Miss Nicol, 'to make a person go melancholy mad.'

'Let him be, Janet, let him be,' said Mr. McCullagh, when appealed to on the subject of Robert's 'vagaries'; 'the mother made, perhaps, over much of him, and it's natural he should fret after her;' and in his own way Mr. McCullagh tried to conciliate and comfort the boy. He gave him weak tea or milk-and-water for his breakfast. He brought him up tiny parcels of confectionery, he got him a bag of marbles and a spinning-top, but it was all in vain; the child took what his father had to give with listless indifference, and soon recommenced his aimless rambles through the house.

'What you want is a sound whipping, Robbie,' said Miss Nicol one day, when, meeting him coming slowly up the stairs, she asked him 'what he wanted,' and the boy answered he did 'not know;' 'and if I were your father I would give it to you.'

Robert did not say a word in reply; he only laid his face on the broad balustrade, and as she reached the landing she heard a strangled yet irrepressible sob.

'Carle take the lad,' she muttered; 'why can't he go and play himself like his brothers?' and again she spoke to Mr. McCullagh, stating her belief that unless 'something was done Robert would break his heart.'

'If you could tell me what is to be done, there might be some use in your talking,' answered Mr. McCullagh, in the tone which had so often exasperated his wife; 'but if you can't, you had best hold your tongue.'

Miss Nicol followed this excel-

lent advice, not because she felt in the slightest degree offended at Mr. McCullagh's words or manner, which were only, as she often said, 'his way,' but because she really had no suggestion to offer, having merely thrown out a hint as to the child's condition in the hope it would 'simmer' in his father's mind.

Mr. McCullagh was, however, neither blind nor indifferent. Hard he might be, but just at that period he came nearer loving his first-born than had ever been the case since the boy was two years old. Deep down in the depths of the flintiest nature there is implanted a yearning for affection, a desire to be mourned after and remembered when earth's cares and vanities are for us no more; and Mr. McCullagh, seeing the child's grief for his mother, longed perchance for even a modicum of that attachment to be transferred to him.

But it was not to be for ever. At the precise period when Mr. McCullagh felt most perplexed as to what he should do with regard to Robert, Mr. Mostin chanced to call.

By one of those inexplicable turns of fortune which are always coming to men who fail to make a proper use of them, Mrs. McCullagh's father had some time after his bankruptcy (his estate paid about twopence in the pound) fallen upon his feet. A City gentleman who had known something of Mr. Mostin in his best days, wishing to be his own architect, asked the former builder to carry out his plan, and see the work was well and substantially executed.

In its integrity Mr. Mostin understood his trade to a nicety; he saw that the best materials only were used, that the bricks were properly bedded, that the timber was well seasoned, the drains perfectly laid. Not being tied down

as regarded expense, he suggested and carried out many small improvements on the original plan, which, principally relating to kitchen and laundry arrangements (people washed at home in those days), got talked about and gained him credit.

The one house led to more; by degrees he got together an admirable connection, and at the time of his daughter's death was doing better than had been the case in his palmiest days.

Coming up from the country, where he happened to be superintending the building of an additional wing to a lordly mansion, he happened to call on one of little Robert's worst days at the house off Basinghall-street.

'The little lad's no so well as he might be,' said Mr. McCullagh, in apologetic explanation.

'He will never get better if he goes on as he is doing,' added Miss Nicol, with cruel and unnecessary candour.

His grandfather looked at the child thoughtfully. He was standing beside the window, listlessly gazing out on the dreary court; his cheeks were white, and great black rings circled his eyes. He was growing tall and weedy, 'just like a potato-haulm in a cellar,' thought the builder; his clothes were different from those his mother had got for him; they were strong and good and warm enough, but they were not 'nice.'

'Here, Bob, my boy,' said Mr. Mostin cheerfully, when his scrutiny was quite completed, 'I want you.'

'And don't walk as if you had fourteen-pound weights to your shoes,' observed Miss Nicol.

'Let him be, let him be, Janet,' expostulated Mr. McCullagh, using his customary formula: 'the child is ailing; anybody with half an eye could see that.'

'It seems to me,' observed his grandfather, putting his hand under the boy's chin, and turning up a very thin, mournful, pallid face for public inspection,—'it seems to me, young gentleman, that a run in the country is about what you stand most in need of. How should you like to come with me down into Devonshire for a fortnight? I am lodging at a nice farmhouse there, where there are cows and ducks and Guinea fowl and pigs and horses, and an old pony I daresay they would let you ride round the paddock. Do you think that would put some life in your body and some colour in your cheeks—eh?' and Mr. Mostin, who, while thus speaking ostensibly to the child, had been really addressing the father, glanced as he concluded round at Mr. McCullagh to see how he took the proposition.

'Would you like to go with your grandfather, Robbie?' asked Mr. McCullagh; 'don't say no if ye want to say yes.'

For answer the boy put a thin hand in that of his grandfather, while his eyes lighted up, and a faint smile flickered about his mouth.

'You would be pleased to see all those things?' said Mr. Mostin; 'well, then, you shall. Go and say "Thank you, father, for giving me leave to take such a fine holiday;" and he pushed his grandson gently towards Mr. McCullagh.

'Thank you, father, for giving me leave to take such a fine holiday,' said the child obediently, but retreating even as he spoke to Mr. Mostin's side.

'He's like his mother,' thought Mr. McCullagh, with a bitter pang. 'He can't abide me. He'd take sooner to any stranger.'

'I don't think he has got any clothes fit to go from home in,' said Miss Nicol, practical and disagreeable as usual.

'O, we needn't trouble ourselves about clothes,' answered Mr. Mostin gaily; 'we don't want velvet and fine broadcloth to run about a farmyard, and race with the dogs, and shake down apples in the orchard, and roll on the grass. Eh, my boy?'

It was thus it chanced that Robert the younger left his father's house, never to return to it as a permanent inmate. When the fortnight was over, Mr. Mostin asked permission to keep the child a little longer; then he formally proposed to take him altogether, pay for his education, and start him in the world.

Mr. McCullagh made no objection. He knew well enough, if no one else did, there was that in Robert's nature which would divide them for ever, though one roof covered them, though they ate at one table and sat in one room.

'Ye can't do it,' he said, in answer to his relation's remark, that she did not think it was well to part brothers, or let a boy be brought up independent of his father. 'If two are so constituted it is just an impossibility they can run together, it's best they should run separate, and neither anger nor impede each other. And ye know you couldn't get on with Robert, to say nothing of other matters. Ye would be for aye girding at the boy, and he would be for ever mocking you. It is in his blood and bone, and he can't help it. He'll be better with his grandfather; "like likes like," ye remember, and they'll suit one another to a turn.'

All of which was so far true that Mr. Mostin and Robert agreed admirably; and that, at those convivial meetings when the ex-builder, no matter where he chanced temporarily to put up, gathered various choice and hilarious spirits

around him, the boy was encouraged to give, not without success, such specimens of Miss Janet Nicol's accent and phraseology as delighted the table. Sometimes, emboldened by applause, Robert also ventured a sly imitation of his father's peculiarities, which were totally different from those of his kinswoman.

On such occasions, Mr. Mostin, having generally partaken of more punch than was good for him, would rebuke the lad for 'daring to make game of his parent;' but, at the same time, Robert, seeing him winking at his boon companions, understood clearly his grandfather enjoyed the 'representation,' and only mentioned he was doing wrong as a concession to the proprieties.

In particular there were three Scotch songs the boy chanted with such inimitable gravity and precision, a whole company would be convulsed by the performance. Who knows? Perhaps while the droning melody continued, accompanied only by shrieks of laughter, Mr. Mostin felt at last ample measure was being dealt out to those who had not, he thought, dealt quite fairly with his daughter; and it is very certain the little lad went to rest after one of these exhibitions satisfied and happy, and feeling his mamma would have been pleased had she heard his accurate reproduction in the vernacular of 'Sir Patrick' and 'Auld lang syne.'

There came a day, however, when Mr. Mostin, who happened about that period to be somewhat ailing and short of money, decided a stop must be put to Robert's performances.

'You had best leave off all that sort of thing when we get back to London,' he said to the boy as they walked to the coach which was to convey them to town;

'you hardly know now when you are doing it, and you may get me and yourself too into trouble if anything of the kind should come round to your father's ears. When I can manage it I'll send you to school for a while, where I hope the master will find you something better to do than making game of your elders.'

'Nae doot,' answered Robert, running off to the other side of the road as he spoke, and laughing till the very birds ceased their songs to listen to him.

He was nearly a year older than when he first quitted Basinghall-street, strong, healthy, happy.

'Such a pretty boy,' everybody said.

'And a good boy, too,' his grandfather quickly added.

In due time Robert went to a boarding-school; and Mr. Mostin, in the course of his business meeting with a certain nobleman possessed of very pronounced, if somewhat crude, ideas on the subjects of architecture and decoration, readily induced him to start a weekly journal, in which were explained and discussed at great length and expense the various crotchets agitating the lordly mind. It was about this period that, according to Mr. McCullagh, the builder 'lost his head.'

'It never was good for much,' opined his son-in-law; 'but it's clean gone now. Why, I met him to-day driving a cabriolet down Cheapside. He was smoking a cigar as big as a carrot; and he had a slip of a boy in top-boots, not a bit bigger than wee Allen, perilling his life, holding on like grim death behind.'

That was the golden summer-time of Mr. Mostin's existence. He did not do anything in it worthy the name of work; his name appeared on the outside

page of the journal as a 'Consulting Builder,' in which character he was good enough to find fault with almost everything everybody else did, and to throw out suggestions, none, save those possessed of long purses and little brains, would ever have dreamt of adopting. Mr. McCullagh was quite right. His father-in-law had lost his head, and he never found that useful appendage again, till one day when news arrived at the publishing office of his patron's death.

Then, as if by magic, all the clocks of the establishment ran down and were never wound up again; the editors, contributors, clerks, and errand-boys disappeared as thoroughly as though they had been touched by an enchanter's wand. The journal was offered for sale, and not a bid could be got for it; the shutters were put up, and bills posted all over them announcing the place was to let; in about forty-eight hours the premises had acquired a premature look of neglect and age; and at the end of the same period Mr. Mostin was offering his cab and high-stepping horse with plated harness, at a ruinous sacrifice, and the child in top-boots had gone crying home to his mother, knowing he would never again get such an easy place or indulgent master.

Before all these events happened, Mr. Mostin had done two good things—he married an extremely practical and sensible woman, possessed of a small competence which neither he nor any creditor could touch; further, he had got Robert a very good situation in a merchant's office.

'If you will go back to your own proper business, and stick to it,' said the sensible second wife, addressing her husband, 'and you,' turning to Robert, 'go

on as well as you have been doing, we shall be able to make shift somehow. Of course I always knew we could not continue to live as we have been doing.'

'Mistress Mostin is letting lodgings, and he has taken a situation to look after dilapidations for a gentleman who owns a lot of property in Bermondsey,' explained Mr. McCullagh to Miss Nicol.

'That's a bit of a come down, I'm thinking,' said that lady dryly.

'They seem getting along pretty fair,' answered Mr. McCullagh.

'Is Robert coming home?'

'No; I asked him, but he seemed as if he would prefer casting in his lot with them.'

'How is he getting on?'

'First-rate—better nor ever I expected he would get on at anything.'

And so Robert continued to get on; spite of his father's doubts, no complaints of his son ever reached him. He seemed to give satisfaction to his employers, for, as time went by, they advanced him from post to post, at each change raising his salary.

'Pousnetts seem to set great store by Robert,' Mr. McCullagh was wont on such occasions to remark; to which Miss Nicol would reply, 'Ay, so it seems,' in a tone which committed her to nothing.

The other sons were her favourites. Robert, with his handsome face and easy pleasant manners and southern tongue, might be somebody's fancy—'no doubt,' she thought, 'he is; but for her part give her the other lads—quiet and canny, and with no nonsense about them. There might be something in Robert that suited the English folks; but for her she felt misgivings.'

Still, the years went by, and the young man's conduct justified

none of her forebodings. He and his father came no nearer to each other; but she felt though Mr. McCullagh did not like, he was proud of, his first-born.

When talking about his sons to strangers, he was apt to say they had done wonderfully well, finishing with the remark, 'Pousnetts thought a deal of his eldest. He's manager there, and they trust most things to him.'

Every man has his weakness. Mr. McCullagh in his heart did not care for or believe in his first-born, yet he liked thus to boast about him occasionally.

When he saw him rushing out of bank-parlours, or stopped in the streets and button-holed by the heads of large houses, he was wont to cast disparaging glances upon his son's superfine broadcloth, spotless linen, and carefully brushed hat, and murmur, 'Fine feathers make fine birds. It's to be hoped you'll never have yours plucked off your back;' but then he would return home and tell Miss Nicol how he had seen Robert 'at home amongst the best.'

'He had always high notions,' Miss Nicol invariably answered.

And perhaps it was for this reason, whenever the young man entered his father's door, he seemed to bring the same repellant element with him across the threshold which he met upon it.

CHAPTER V.

MR. POUSNETT REQUESTS THE PLEASURE.

NOR even in the former days, when, after being turned out of the room for some childish misdeemeanour, he stood on the landing and shook his little fist in im-

tent rage at the door just closed against him, had the younger Robert felt he hated his father with such a perfect hatred as when he left the house near Basinghall-street, to which he had gone so jubilantly on 'a fool's errand.'

It was not merely that his request had been refused; but, in addition, every possible element of annoyance accompanied the rejection.

If Mr. McCullagh had considered for days and weeks how to humiliate and mortify his son, he could not have devised a more perfect plan than that he got up on the spur of the moment. In the course of an interview which lasted little more than ten minutes he managed to extol his own system of doing business, to depreciate that of other men, to cast a doubt on Pousnetts' solvency, to insinuate his son was no better than a simpleton, to cut the ground of supposed usefulness from under Robert's feet, and to suggest an awful idea which had not before occurred to the young man—namely, that if he failed to find seven thousand pounds in cash, or cash's equivalent, good bills, he would very likely—most likely, indeed—lose his berth, and find himself as completely out in the cold as had been the case in his childhood, when Mr. McCullagh was in the habit of saying,

'If ye can't behave yourself, Robbie, ye had best leave the room. I can't have dour contrary boys sulking where I am.'

It all came back to him as he strode hurriedly up the court. Fast as he walked, the old, old times seemed to follow faster after him. His pretty indulgent mother, whose beauty was set amid such sordid surroundings; the meagre fires; the meagre meals the wearisome supper-

parties, which derived their only scintillation of amusement from 'toddy,' the quavering Scotch ballads; the decisive, yet drawling, Scotch accent; the cold of the house; its scanty furniture; the advent of Miss Nicol; his mother's death; the small lamentation which was made about that event; the intensely Scotch gathering which partook of the funeral baked meats and 'drappies' of whisky; the instant changes which occurred in the household; the sudden disappearance of all the dead woman's little decorations; the swoop which was made upon her small vanities; the awful weeks which ensued after she was carried down-stairs in her coffin; the quarrels he and his father waged during his boyish visits home; the sneers at his grandfather's uppishness; the mock condolences when Mr. Mostin fell; the sarcasms, not always covert, at his own pretensions—as all these things rushed through his mind, the younger Robert hurried on as though, to quote one of his father's favourite phrases, 'the de'il were after him,' which, perhaps, indeed he was.

As a rule, a man need have no worse devil at his heels than a weak ill-regulated mind.

There was nothing less likely than that, in his present state of irritation, Robert junior would immediately bend his steps in the direction of his employers' office. Horribly mortified, and with a feeling of the keenest disappointment distracting his heart, the young man traversed that nest of courts and alleys which still intervenes between Basinghall-street and Gutter-lane.

Those alone who, in their extremity, when some grievous hour of need was just upon the point of striking, have turned out of the busy, bustling, noisy thorough-

fares of London, thronged full of people, can understand the soothing effects produced upon young McCullagh's mind by Three Nuns' passage, or the narrow pavement around the church of St. Michael Bassishaw.

By the time he reached Gutter-lane and was making his way back to Cheapside by Mitre-court, he felt able to face the position. Quiet London had laid her soothing hand upon him (and in the whole of Nature there is no such soother as London can be on occasion—at once an opiate and a tonic), and, though the trouble still remained, he felt he could go back and talk to Mr. Pousnett about it; tell him he must give up all idea of the partnership; that he had played the sole card he possessed, and lost his game.

Pousnetts' firm carried on business in a court leading out of Leadenhall-street; they had the whole of the court to themselves, and even then their premises were not half large enough for the business they did. They owned Nos. 1 to 5 inclusive; and every inch of the premises was tenanted by clerks, packers, foremen, correspondents, and suchlike. A princely house Pousnetts' had once been styled; and Mr. Pousnett, the present head of the firm, was reckoned in the City a most courtly gentleman. His appearance was one which commanded attention; his manners were in advance of that of any Lord Mayor, past, present, or to come. He did not patronise City tailors; and his dress was of a cut and style Lombard-street, with tardy halting steps, lagged after in vain.

Pousnetts did business with all parts of the habitable globe. It was an old house, which had been in existence before George II. came to the throne, or Culloden was

fought. No more respectable firm existed in the City of London. The world clearly understood when it put itself in Pousnetts' hands it would be well treated, and that it might relax a little of its customary suspicion in dealing with people who stood so far above all suspicion. Vain, and in many respects simple, as Robert McCullagh happened to be, his own rapid advance in Pousnetts' house had surprised himself almost as much as it had done his father. He could ascribe it to no other cause than the liking Mr. Pousnett had conceived for him. Love begets love, we are told, and it was possible the young man's admiration of his chief, his slavish imitation of his dress and manner, his fixed belief that on the face of the earth no such house as Pousnetts' could be found, might have touched even the worldly heart of Herrion Pousnett. Ice was not colder or stone harder than that heart in reality; but it wore on the surface a pleasant air of sunny geniality. Mr. Pousnett had never been seen in an undignified rage; he never vituperated his clerks; he never signed angry letters; he never stormed and swore 'promiscuous,' like old Betterton in Tower-street, when business matters went wrong, or uninsured ships went to the bottom, or people failed and let the house in for what would have seemed great fortunes to smaller firms. Summer and winter, this good Christian's temper was always the same; his manners were uniformly suave; his course of proceeding dignifiedly respectable.

When debtors did not pay he never troubled them or himself with unnecessary correspondence: he simply handed the matter to his solicitor, and said it had passed out of his control. The most severe thing he ever said about a

persistent bore, with right on his side, was,

'Do not let that person see me again.'

Though not foremost, Mr. Pousnett was ever prominent in good works. He did not attend meetings or sit on committees; but he gave his cheque for most charitable purposes, which, in the opinion of various secretaries, answered all purposes quite as well, if not better. He had a house at the West-end, and a pretty place on the Thames. In private life he did not affect business acquaintances. It was known at the office his daughters had their maids, and his sons their hunters. It was understood Mr. Pousnett's Christian name was derived from his mother's side of the house; and that, in some remote way, he was through her allied to nobility—a stately gentleman as ever paced Leadenhall-street morning after morning, and affably returned the respectful greetings of his clerks, and opened the letters laid upon his table without haste or anxiety, or the slightest dread as to what the envelopes might contain.

In striking contrast all this to the proceedings in that other court off Basinghall-street, to the primitive manners, the broad Scotch speech, the keen cynical tongue of 'auld Rab' and his awkward squad of Northern followers, not one of whom had been trained, or could have been trained, in that school of politeness it was the glory of Pousnetts' young men to belong to, and their study and ambition to maintain intact.

And it was in such a house as this young Robert might, but for his father's absurd prejudices, have been partner; there he had the opportunity of hanging up his hat for life, and yet could not avail himself of the offer. Well,

it was not his fault; if he had been constituted differently, perhaps his father would have helped him; but, save in a spiritual sense, a man cannot be born again, and if he could, Robert McCullagh felt very sure no number of fresh births were likely to make him resemble the Scotch merchant's idea of human perfection.

No, it was all over, and he would tell Mr. Pousnett so at once. No object could be gained by delaying his communication. A week or a year would effect, he knew, no change in his father's determination, and it was best Mr. Pousnett should understand what that determination turned out to be, at once.

It was with a very dejected mien that, after knocking at the door of the great man's room, Robert entered the apartment he had hoped, but a few hours previously, soon to be free of. Mr. Pousnett had already got on his top-coat, and was looking into his hat, as is the custom of men, before covering his head. He did not glance round as the manager entered; he merely said,

'Well, what is it?'

'I only wanted to speak to you, sir,' answered young McCullagh; 'but I see you are going, and I will not detain you. Tomorrow—the next day—any time will do.'

'I am in no hurry,' answered Mr. Pousnett pleasantly. 'I was only going because there seemed nothing more to do here; what did you want to say to me?'

Certainly a polished gentleman in appearance, manner, and speech; so polished, and so dissimilar from Mr. McCullagh, it was difficult for a moment to realise they belonged to the same species.

'I have spoken to my father, sir.'

'Yes.' How different that yes

sounded from the same word when used interrogatively by 'plain old Rab'! Nothing harsh or querulous about it in this case: it merely seemed musically to lead the listener on to the next portion of his theme.

'And I must give up all idea of availing myself of your kindness. He won't help me in the least.'

'That is bad,' replied Mr. Pousnett. 'I am very sorry to hear such news. Tell me what passed. Sit down;' and the great man laid aside his hat, unbuttoned his top-coat, and resumed the chair he had so lately quitted.

It was not in the least degree difficult to talk to Mr. Pousnett: many men, indeed, had, at one time or other, found cause to curse the fatal facility with which speech seemed to flow from their lips in his presence; for Mr. Pousnett never forgot anything: the most careless sentence uttered in his hearing remained stamped in his memory, and was apt to be recalled to the speaker long after his random utterance had faded from his mind.

In five minutes, nay in two, Robert put him in possession of his father's views on things in general, his opinion of Mr. Pousnett's offer, and his determination neither to mull nor meddle in the matter.

'I might have had a chance if it had not been for Kenneth,' finished the young man gloomily; and it is to be feared, in his heart, at that moment, he wished anything but good to that more fortunate individual.

'Kenneth! who is Kenneth?' asked Mr. Pousnett, rousing himself from a reverie into which he seemed to have fallen.

'My brother, sir, the one I told you about who—'

'Who is to have the three

thousand pounds and the pretty wife?' interrupted Mr. Pousnett, laughing. 'I understand now; only you did not mention his name when speaking about him. A very fortunate fellow indeed, and I wish him all success in his business, and happiness in his marriage. By the way, what is the name of his future father-in-law?'

'Johnstone, sir—V. Johnstone & Son of Liverpool. The head of the firm must have been dead this hundred years, I think, for the present man looks about two centuries old.'

'V. Johnstone,' repeated Mr. Pousnett; 'do you mean Vincent Johnstone of Old Hall-street?'

'His place is in Old Hall-street,' conceded Robert gloomily.

'Then your brother has stepped into a good thing, a remarkably good thing,' said Mr. Pousnett thoughtfully, 'and I heartily wish him joy. A house in a small way, perhaps; but safe. I know no firm which, in its degree, stands higher. I do not wonder at your father's pleasure, particularly as it costs him nothing.'

'It would be a most remarkable thing which could please my father if it did cost anything,' said Robert, in a tone of conviction.

'I do not wonder at his refusal to assist you in the face of such a windfall as that you mention,' went on Mr. Pousnett blandly.

'O sir,' pleaded young McCullagh, 'I wish you would not mention this business and old Johnstone's in the same breath!'

'I am not comparing them,' said Mr. Pousnett benignantly.

'I was only trying to put myself in your father's place for a moment—trying to look with his eyes, and understand what he must feel. He seems to be, if somewhat narrow in his views,

a most astute man—so far as he goes a most remarkable man.'

Robert looked at his principal to see if he were in jest; on the contrary, Mr. Pousnett's face wore an expression of anxious and perplexed consideration.

'A most remarkable man. I should like to know him personally,' and here he paused again, whilst young McCullagh, fairly lost in amazement, stared with all his might at the countenance of his chief.

It is the specialty of fools that they ever fail to grasp the fact of unlikely men being wise.

Robert had always thought his father sharp, shrewd, mean, quick at a bargain, in a pottering sort of way a keen man of business; but it had never before, never once, occurred to him he was clever. Mr. Mostin was his ideal of a clever fellow. 'Lord bless you,' Robert would say, 'drop him when you like and he'll drop on his feet. *Only think of all the misfortunes he has passed through,* and how no sooner did he find one door shut before he found another open! I never saw such a man: full of resources, ready to turn his hand to anything,' and all the while he contrasted his father with this paragon, and thought in his heart, 'Ah, if Mr. Mostin only had the business in Basinghall-street, what would he not make of it!' utterly ignoring the fact that the ex-builder was one of those men who eventually make ducks and drakes of most businesses, and who, while an admirable manager in theory of their fellows' concerns, never prove equal in the long-run to managing their own.

'I do not think,' resumed Mr. Pousnett, after a pause, 'your father can have quite grasped all the advantages which would accrue to you and his other sons

were he to put you in the way of accepting my offer.'

'I am sure he has not, sir,' answered Robert; 'and what is more, he never will.'

'That is to be seen,' said Mr. Pousnett, leaning back in his chair, and half closing his eyes as he spoke. 'I think I must take him in hand. I want to have you as one of the house,' he added, with a delightful smile (people said Mr. Pousnett's smile was to him what the angel's veil of moss was to the rose); 'but I am determined you shall not enter it empty-handed.'

'I quite understand that, sir,' said Robert, in a downhearted manner; 'and I assure you I left nothing unsaid I considered likely to move my father to compliance. It was all to no purpose, however; I might just as well, better, have held my tongue; and so I have given up all thoughts of it, sir, and—and—I have nothing more to say,' finished Robert, dejectedly rising as he spoke, and pushing his chair as far as it would go under the table in a crazy absent-minded sort of manner.

Mr. Pousnett watched this manœuvre curiously. There could be no doubt that the son at least understood the value of what he was losing.

'You have quite interested me in your father,' he said at last. 'I feel I must make his acquaintance. I will call upon him; no, I will ask him to dinner—cut his mutton with me, eh?—and we'll talk the matter over exhaustively, after we have finished cutting our mutton.'

'To dinner, sir? I don't think you exactly understand,' stammered Robert. 'My father—most worthy man, no doubt—had not any of the advantages in his early life such as fall to the lot of young men nowadays. He is not exactly

—don't press me—Mr. Pousnett, please to say what I mean !

'He is not exactly like anybody else, I suppose,' said the great merchant, laughing; 'indeed, I am very sure that he is quite different from most people. I must know him. I regret extremely no opportunity has before presented itself of making his acquaintance. I will write and ask him to dine with me; then we can talk this matter over.'

'I do not think, sir, you have any idea of what my father really is,' said Robert resolutely.

'I hope soon to have the pleasure of knowing,' was the reply.

'An angel could not lead and the devil could not drive him,' persisted young McCullagh doggedly.

'I have no gift either for leading or driving,' said Mr. Pousnett; 'but I mean to make your father's acquaintance, and hope our intimacy may prove profitable to both. Of course, I shall expect the pleasure of your company on the same evening this day week at seven;' and this time Mr. Pousnett put on his hat as a sign the interview might be considered at an end, opened the door, and walked, deferentially followed by Robert, across the office to the street, where, bidding his manager good-night, he passed out into the gas-illuminated darkness of a November night.

Mr. Pousnett was not a man who ever let grass grow under his feet; and accordingly next day Mr. McCullagh, sitting at breakfast, and 'supping his porridge' as a preliminary to the tea, fried bacon, and bread he had to follow, received a missive sealed with a great seal, bearing sundry heraldic devices intelligible only to the King-at-Arms.

'Bless and save us all, what's this?' exclaimed Mr. McCullagh,

whose eye was caught by the bold caligraphy and the pretentious coat of arms. 'It must be from the Lord Mayor at the very least! What an awful waste o' wax, to be sure!'

'It is a grand seal, though,' said Miss Nicol, taking up the envelope which Mr. McCullagh had tossed aside. 'Look, Effie, can you make out the words underneath? They're Latin, I am almost certain.'

By this time Mr. McCullagh had mastered the contents of the epistle, which he laid face downwards on the table.

'I'll give ye,' he remarked, commencing at the same moment a vigorous attack upon the basin of porridge which stood smoking at his elbow, 'I'll give ye three guesses to say who that letter is from.'

'Maybe from the Lord Mayor himself,' hazarded Miss Nicol.

'Or Prince Albert,' conjectured Effie.

'Or the Emperor of the French,' said Miss Nicol.

'That is three between you,' remarked Mr. McCullagh, chuckling; 'and all wrong. No, ye'd never guess if ye sat trying for a twelvemonth. It is from Robert's employer.'

'What's wrong now?' asked Miss Nicol; 'I thought he seemed sort of uneasy last evening.'

'Did ye?' commented Mr. McCullagh dryly. 'Well, there is nothing wrong. All the man says is, "Will ye take a knife and fork with us this day week in Portman-square?"'

'That is a good joke, too!' said Miss Nicol.

Never for an instant did that worthy lady think the statement other than a piece of the 'wut' in which it pleased the Scotchman occasionally to indulge.

'Joke! it is no joke,' answered

Mr. McCullagh. 'It is as civil a note as ever I read, and as well put together. What he says in effect is, Will ye take pot-luck with us in a homely friendly sort of way?'

'But you'll not go,' assumed Miss Nicol, jumping to conclusions too hastily, as her sex are wont to do.

'I don't know that,' answered her relative, who, indeed, till that moment, had not entertained an idea of accepting the invitation. 'Why wouldn't I go? What for should I affront the man by declining what no doubt he means kindly?'

'There is no reason, of course,' acquiesced Miss Nicol; 'only I thought ye didn't much care to consort with such grand folks.'

'It is not consorting with grand folks to once and away put my legs under their mahogany. I supped last night with Kenneth's master, and a right good tumbler of toddy he gave us. I may just as well eat my dinner with Robert's master. I never have seen him, and I am a bit curious to see him.'

'Here is Robert,' said Effie at this juncture; and almost as she spoke the door opened and that young man himself appeared.

'Find yourself a place!' cried Mr. McCullagh effusively. 'The tea is mashing; ye'll take a cup, won't ye?'

'I breakfasted an hour ago, thank you,' answered Robert, finding himself a place, however, as desired.

'Ye ken,' said Miss Nicol, who never lost an opportunity of dealing the young man a back-handed blow, 'he doesn't think our brew strong enough.'

'On the contrary,' Robert replied, 'I generally find it far too strong—bitter. I do not think tea ought to stand a minute.'

'Hoots!' cried Mr. McCullagh,

'how would ye ever get the good out of it if ye didn't let it stand? But tea is not the question now. I have just got a letter from your master asking me to dine with him.'

'He told me he meant to ask you last night,' said Robert, whose sole motive in coming round had been to ascertain whether Mr. Pousnett had carried his project into effect.

'And your father is going,' said Miss Nicol suggestively.

'Who told ye I was going?' inquired Mr. McCullagh. 'I asked ye what would hinder me to go, and I said I might as well eat my dinner with him as my supper with old Johnstone, and that I was a bit curious to see the gentleman; but I never said I had just made up my mind.'

'You won't go, though, of course,' remarked his son carelessly. 'I told him it was of no use asking you.'

'And why did ye tell him anything of the sort, and what should hinder me going? To hear ye both talk, any one might think it was an invitation from Windsor Castle that had come instead of a friendly note from a merchant like myself.'

'You mistake me, father,' said Robert, though, indeed, his father had not mistaken him in the least. 'All I meant was that, as you do not care much for visiting out of your immediate circle of acquaintances, I thought you would not fancy going so far as Portman-square; and besides—'

'Besides what?' asked Mr. McCullagh sharply.

'All those sort of people dress for dinner,' explained Robert desperately, 'and I did not know whether you had any clothes just suitable to go in.'

'What's the matter with my clothes?' cried Mr. McCullagh,

glancing first over one shabby shoulder and then over its fellow. 'I am sure this is a good enough coat for all ordinary purposes; but I have a better, Robert, don't be uneasy. If ye never have to put up with any more discredit than your father brings upon ye, ye'll have no cause of complaint,' and having so spoken, Mr. McCullagh handed his empty basin to Effie, who removed it to the side-board, and then brought a plate of bacon that had been simmering in front of the fire, which she placed before her benefactor.

'Try a wee, Robert,' said Mr. McCullagh hospitably. But Robert in answer only shook his head; he felt, indeed, at that moment as though food would choke him.

'Then I can tell Mr. Pousnett, he may expect to see you,' he observed after a second's pause.

'Ye'll tell him nothing whatsoever from me,' answered Mr. McCullagh, discussing his bacon. 'I am not so helpless but I can answer my letters for myself, and make up my mind for myself too.'

'I meant no offence, sir.'

'And I have taken none,' was the quick reply.

'If you decide upon accepting the invitation, will you let me know? Mr. Pousnett has asked me as well, and we could go together.'

'I'll communicate with ye,' promised Mr. McCullagh; and, having gained no single point, save this, by his early visit, Robert, muttering something about being late at the office, took his leave.

'Mr. Pousnett seems to set great store by him,' remarked Miss Nicol, as the sound of the young man's footsteps upon the stairs died away.

'There's no reason why he shouldn't,' retorted Mr. McCullagh, who was great in opposition.

'Where would ye meet a straighter, better-built, better-looking, better-spoken young man than my son Robert? He's just a credit, even physically speaking, to any house. So far as looks are concerned, ye must admit, Janet, he's the pick of my sons. What do ye say, Effie?'

But Effie, who had stolen across the room to watch Robert's retreating figure till he turned the angle of the court, kept her face fastened upon the window-pane, and affected not to hear.

CHAPTER VI.

A FAMILY PARTY.

THE eventful evening arrived. Duly and truly Mr. McCullagh had signified his intention of making one at Mr. Pousnett's social board; and it is not too much to say that, during the days which ensued after his parent's decision was made known to him, the younger Robert suffered agonies.

Mentally he beheld his father in every likely and unlikely social scrape; clearly he heard every intonation of that remarkable accent grate upon his ear; in imagination he saw that mean ill-clad figure surrounded by rank, fashion, and those who were to the manner born. He fancied how the servants would stare at him; how the ladies would start at sound of a voice little, if any, sweeter than his national bagpipes; how Mr. Pousnett would repent his rashness; how he, Robert, would be covered with shame, and feel disposed to request the earth to open and swallow him up.

That fickle jade Ideality, which will not answer to our call when most we desire her company, and

insists on keeping step with us when we wish her miles away, never for one instant quitted Robert's side during the intervening seven days of misery. She never left him during the day; she influenced his dreams at night; she was for ever presenting to his consideration some almost impossible dilemma, and playing him even in sleep some scurvy trick, such as setting Mr. McCullagh down to dinner in his hat or without his coat, or making him insist on a 'cut of beef' while fish was still in progress.

It was only a week from the first intimation of that trouble till its consummation; yet, during the progress of that week, Robert fell away in flesh, and his face grew peaked and anxious. Mr. Pousnett beheld and smiled in private, but said nothing. Long before, he had taken the measure of his manager, and knew how to fit him like a glove.

All his trouble, however, had not prevented the younger McCullagh ordering a quite new suit of clothes, in which, well covered from sight by a top-coat closely buttoned, he appeared at the paternal mansion a little after six o'clock.

'You do look a swell, Robert,' said Miss Nicol, regarding with no particular favour the young man, who, standing uncovered in the dreary sitting-room, could not conceal his curly hair fresh from an artist's hand, his clean-shaven chin, his bright boots, his faultless collar, his white tie; 'doesn't he, Effie?' But Effie, who had been feasting her eyes upon this spectacle of manly beauty, again made no direct answer. Muttering something about her uncle, as she called Mr. McCullagh, wanting her, she hurried from the room, only to encounter that sage individual on the threshold.

'I am quite ready, Robert,' said Mr. McCullagh, coming briskly forward.

Like another famous personage,

'He was drest in his Sunday's best';

and Robert, as he surveyed his parent, had never felt so near liking him before. He had never thought the 'sweetstuff-man,' as some persons called him, could have looked, not merely so decent, but so presentable.

Though Mr. McCullagh wore his clothes almost to the last thread, he always bought them of the best materials; and the consequence of this was that his best coat, which he kept for attending funerals, was of a quality neither tailor nor flunky could gainsay.

If it lacked the cut Robert's own swallow-tail boasted, it was perhaps more suitable to the *rôle* of a successful City man. There was an amplitude about its skirts which suggested a good balance at the bank; and in the loosely-tied bow of Mr. McCullagh's washing neckhandkerchief there was a defiance and an indifference a Rothschild or a great financier might have envied.

He had oiled his sandy hair, and shaven himself even cleaner than usual; into his manner he had imported a certain festivity of demeanour, which his son remembered well as an adjunct to those supper-parties where Scottish songs and Scottish anecdotes beguiled the length of an otherwise tedious evening; there was a scent of Windsor soap, and a perfume of fragrant linen and broadcloth laid aside with lavender-bags between, that seemed grateful to the younger man.

Inwardly he thanked his father for what he could not but consider concessions; it was really good of him, he felt. Perhaps, after all, he was reconsidering that

matter of the seven thousand pounds!

'Shall I get a cab, sir?' asked Robert, who had indeed brought his boots by that means spotless to the top of the court.

'A caub!' repeated Mr. McCullagh. 'The Lord presairve us, Robert, are ye mad? A caub, and the night fine and the stars shining! No, no, I am not just so tired of my hard-aimed sex-pences as to throw them away that gait.'

'I only thought we might be a trifle late,' said Robert hypocritically. 'Time is getting on.'

'Let it,' observed Mr. McCullagh; 'we'll be at Portman-square well within the hour. Good-night, Janet,' he went on; 'good-night, Effie. It'll be on to eleven before I'm back. Don't lose your beauty sleep, either of ye, for me.'

Gaunt and erect stood Miss Nicol during the progress of this amiable speech; meek and drooping, Effie.

'Good-night, Effie,' said Robert kindly, with a feeling for the moment stirring his heart that the girl's life was lonely and unnatural. 'Good-night, and be sure you don't forget the beauty sleep.'

'Ay, ay, mind that,' added Mr. McCullagh, groping his way down the grand old staircase, lighted by the mournful gleam of one sad dip held aloft by Effie on the landing.

Never had Robert known his father talk so much to him as they stepped briskly down Bainghall-street side by side. With his work-a-day suit Mr. McCullagh seemed to have doffed his ordinary manner, and discoursed on all sorts of subjects till Old Jewry was passed and Cheapside reached, and it became

necessary to concentrate his attention on stopping a Baker-street omnibus.

No poor wretch who ever travelled the West-end route, surrounded with much state and circumstance, to Tyburn, experienced a greater sinking of the heart than young McCullagh, as the vehicle bumped and jolted along.

The demons exorcised for a few minutes came back now accompanied by legions of fresh doubts and fears.

Would his father expect the company to sit round the table and sing songs when dinner was finished, as had been the wont at those supper-parties Robert remembered as a boy? Would he, in the plenitude of his jocularity, ask Miss Pousnett to give them a stave? would he tell Mr. Pousnett, if he declared he had no voice, he would be let off with a good story or a bit of recitation extracted from Whistle Binkie? would he propose a toast, and suggest it should be drunk Highland fashion, by the gentlemen guests standing on their chairs and planting one foot upon the table? would he act as fogleman, and lead on the cheering? All these things, and many more, had Robert beheld, and he turned literally sick as he reflected what might be in store for him.

'You're no looking just the thing to-night,' observed Mr. McCullagh, as the omnibus drew up at Oxford-circus and the light from a lamp fell full upon his son's face.

'I have not felt well for some days past,' was the answer.

'I think ye are a bit over-anxious,' said his father. 'If ye would take a word of advice from me, don't fret about the matter. Supposing the offer does come to nothing, some day maybe

ye'll see it was all for the best ; from which cheering remark Robert gathered the seven thousand pounds was as far from him as ever.

'I am not fretting about that,' said the young man.

'What are ye fretting about, then ?'

'I don't know that I am fretting about anything ;' and then the omnibus jogging on again, conversation became difficult.

The door of Mr. Pousnett's house in Portman-square was opened by a butler whose grave and dignified demeanour seemed to impress even Mr. McCullagh with a feeling of solemnity. No archbishop ever comported himself with greater stateliness. The way in which he assisted the elder guest off with his coat and relieved him of his hat was a study ; the hushed and suave voice that asked, 'What name, sir?' was one never to be forgotten.

As he might have gone to the scaffold, Robert ascended the stairs, which were covered with carpeting that felt like moss beneath his feet. He went so slowly, his father, who had skipped lightly on before him, had to pause on the landing ; whilst the butler, who stood with the handle of the drawing-room door clasped in his fingers, looked upon the younger man's tardiness of progress more in sorrow than in anger.

Mr. McCullagh—Mr. Robert McCullagh, announced the butler, flinging wide the door.

Then it was done ; the axe had fallen ; the Rubicon was passed ; they were in the bosom of the Pousnett family ; their first experience of high society had commenced.

In the most genial manner Mr. Pousnett came forward to greet his guests. He was delighted to

make Mr. McCullagh's acquaintance ; he was charmed to see him in his house ; he felt his coming all the greater honour because he understood that, like a wise man, Mr. McCullagh thought there was no place like home.

'Let me introduce you to my wife,' he said ; an attention Mrs. Pousnett declared was quite unnecessary, 'for I feel,' added that lady, who weighed about twenty stone, and had that dulcet smoothness of tone and manner which distinguishes fat people, 'as if we were old acquaintances. Come and sit near me, Mr. McCullagh, pray do. This is my eldest daughter, and that my youngest. You do not know Mr. Stoddard, nor Captain Crawford,' and as she mentioned each name she dexterously made Mr. McCullagh known to its possessor. 'And now we can talk comfortably. What lovely weather this is for the time of year ! O, by the bye, I have not spoken to your son. Mr. Robert, I hope you will excuse my rudeness ;' and again rising, she shook hands with her husband's manager in a very gracious manner.

And yet Robert had never felt himself so utterly a subordinate as at that moment.

After a short time two other young ladies entered the room, who were mentioned respectively as 'my niece Miss Vanderton, and my daughter Maude.' The party now seemed complete, and Mr. McCullagh, who was seated beside his charming hostess in the full glare of an immense fire, began to wonder when dinner would be served.

A mingled odour of many good things had greeted his nostrils as he entered the hall, and as, looking forward to the evening's dinner, he contented himself with a mere snack in the middle of the

day, he was beginning to feel hungry.

Proverbially there is no worse quarter of an hour than that which now ensued; and though Mrs. Pousnett did her best and Mr. Pousnett exerted himself to the utmost, it was a very bad time which intervened between the announcement of the guests and the reappearance of the butler on the evening that proved the turning-point in young McCullagh's life.

To his amazement, Robert found he was far less at ease than his father; that the latter took all the ease and luxury and magnificence of the house as mere matters of course, and viewed with the indifference of a Red Indian hangings and pictures and statues and screens and nicknacks that he himself was forced to glance at surreptitiously, his gaze seeming to be attracted to them by some power much stronger than his own will. Very good-naturedly the eldest daughter took pity on him, and invited his attention to some wonderful Indian carvings that ornamented a side-table; then she took him to the conservatory, which led out of the back drawing-room, and they talked about flowers, of which Robert knew but little, till they were joined by their hostess and Mr. McCullagh, who, it turned out, was much more at home in Flora's domain than his son.

He had seen good gardens in his youth, and remembered what he had seen. He was able to talk about the Duke of Hamilton's hot-houses in Arran, and the ferns and heather he had gathered in that island when he was young. He knew the names of many of the plants in the conservatory which were strange to his son, and could give Miss Pousnett a hint as to the mode of striking myrtles so as to insure their blooming.

Knowledge of any kind is sure to make its way, perhaps for the reason that, as a rule, people know remarkably little; and before she swept down the stairs to dinner, leaning on his arm, Mrs. Pousnett, who was a remarkably astute lady, understood Robert McCullagh was a well-meaning good-looking goose, while his father possessed all the brains of which the young man was destitute.

What a fairy scene that dining-room seemed to Robert! Its warmth, its comfort, the subdued lights, the appointments of the table, the silver, the glass, the china, the snowy damask, the noiseless and perfect attendance, the dresses of the ladies, the quiet repose of their manners: he had never seen anything like it before in all his life, and it came upon him with a new pang that such an existence might be his if only his father would listen to reason. As he thought of this, Robert looked very steadily at the author of his being, and was fain to confess he had never beheld a man less likely to be coerced or flattered into any course of action than the architect and builder of his own fortunes.

Amongst all that grandeur he sat unmoved as the Sphinx in the desert. There must have been things in connection with such a meal to try the equanimity of a man whose own domestic arrangements had always been of the roughest and readiest description; but Mr. McCullagh might have been sitting at great men's feasts all his life for aught any one could from his manner have told to the contrary. He was as quick as lightning; at any critical period one glance around told him what others were doing, and seemed to give him the needful hint. Robert, had he been gifted with a spirit of prescience, might have saved himself much unnecessary anguish

of mind. Whatever the father might feel, the son looked by far the more awkward. In his attempts at conversation with the daughters of the house, in his answers to Mr. Pousnett's remarks, in his evident fear of doing that which he ought not to do, and leaving something undone which he should subsequently call to remembrance with burning cheeks, Robert McCullagh was as evidently out of his element in Mr. Pousnett's dining-room as he felt in the paternal parlour.

Setting aside all social reasons for these results, the young man was anxious and nervous as to the upshot of the evening's proceedings. Would or would not his father be led to see the error of his ways, and delightedly make himself responsible for seven thousand pounds? Would the wealth and the grandeur and the kindness and the deference induce him to alter his decision? Would his pride be touched, his vanity flattered, his reason be convinced? Robert did not believe it. With a fainting spirit he addressed himself to the dinner, to which he brought but scanty appetite, and with all his heart and with all his soul wished the whole thing over.

Mr. McCullagh, on the other hand, was quite at his ease; he was passing through no alternations of hope and fear; he had quite made up his mind on the subject at issue, and so felt able to devote himself to doing the agreeable.

Captain Crawford had not long before been stationed in Edinburgh—indeed, he was of Scotch extraction—and he and the merchant talked of many things, in which Mrs. Pousnett also professed the keenest interest.

'We have spent some most delightful months in Scotland one

time or another,' she was good enough to say. 'I always tell my husband there is no place like it anywhere.'

'And you're very right there,' remarked Mr. McCullagh. 'Where would ye find a town like Edinbro', for instance, or, just to go no further, any scenery like that of the Clyde? Have ye seen the Holy Loch? No! And I mind me ye said ye had never been to Arran.'

'But we know the Burns country,' pleaded the lady, in extenuation.

'And have ye stood on the very spot, mem,' said Mr. McCullagh, warming to his work, 'where the witches got a hold of Meg's tail, and pulled it right away from—Ahem!' coughed the North-countryman, remembering just in time that the broad speech of his earlier youth might be somewhat out of place in Portman-square and the presence of ladies.

Mrs. Pousnett, however, took no notice of his confusion.

'I think we saw everything,' she said: 'the thorn-tree and the place where—what was her name?—hung herself; the old ruin where I really could conjure up that weird company—see the Evil One playing jigs, and Cutty Sark capering away to the delight of Tam peeping through the window. It is a most eerie place. Do you know, I dreamt of that old churchyard for nights afterwards.'

'For my part,' said Captain Crawford, 'I like Edinburgh better than any other portion of Scotland. Scott has invested the city and its environs with a charm it must retain so long as the ruthless hand of improvement passes it by. I never wearied of walking over Arthur's Seat, or exploring the Canongate, or mooning about Holyrood Palace. If it had not been for the hope of

being ordered abroad, I should have quite lamented returning to London.'

'Are you expecting marching orders, then?' asked Mr. McCullagh, who was amongst other things a keen politician.

'Sailing orders,' amended the officer. 'Yes, I trust we shall be sent to the Crimea ere long. It is dreadful to stay here idle, and think of all that is going on there now.'

He had struck the right vein; as the war-horse rushes to the battle, Mr. McCullagh plunged into the conversational abyss thus opened. With his keen eyes growing keener, with his sandy hair seeming to bristle like that of a rough terrier, with his heart on his lips and his soul in his face, the merchant held forth on the weakness, folly, incapacity of the Government.

'Every man of them ought to be indicted for murder,' he said; 'not manslaughter, but murder. They'll make England the byword of the world. I wonder what will be said in nineteen hundred and fifty-four, when people read how the best and bravest were left to die like cattle? And all for what? That red tape might assert its supremacy, and a wheen idle young puppies in Government offices make it appear as if they had something really to do.'

'I am quite with you there,' said Captain Crawford, as if at some far-away point he meant to differ from the speaker *in toto*.

'Now, Captain, pray do not disturb the peace of the household by introducing politics,' entreated Mrs. Pousnett. 'Mr. McCullagh, may I beg of you to abandon the Eastern Question?' and the lady laid a persuasive hand, on which glittered many rings, on the merchant's arm as she spoke. 'If you knew, if you

only knew the dread I have of hearing the word Crimea, you would pity me, I am quite sure.'

'I can't say I think you are alone in that dread,' observed Mr. McCullagh dryly.

'There now, I felt sure you would agree with me,' she said, 'in so far as this, at all events, that politics are better absent from the dinner-table. You have no appetite,' she went on, with a bland smile. 'Is there nothing that you like?'

'I have done very well, thank ye,' answered Mr. McCullagh, who had marked with amazement Mrs. Pousnett's gastronomic capabilities.

At that moment the lady took a goodly helping of cabinet pudding, remarking as she did so,

'It is said, I believe, that fat people are, as a rule, small eaters: if you ever hear that again, Mr. McCullagh, don't believe it.'

'I won't, mem,' he agreed, with a readiness quite unexpected.

It was irresistible. Mrs. Pousnett laughed, her daughters laughed, Captain Crawford laughed, and finally Mr. McCullagh himself joined in.

'I would beg your pardon if it had not been your own fault,' he said, when the merriment subsided.

'I do not think it was any one's fault,' Mrs. Pousnett replied, laughing again, and then fanning herself vigorously.

At length the dinner came to an end, the cloth had been drawn—incredible as it may sound nowadays, cloths were drawn six-and-twenty years ago—dessert had been partaken of, the ladies had retired, and then Mr. Pousnett, passing a decanter of fine old port towards Mr. McCullagh, said he thought he would find that a wine to his taste.

'It is verra good,' answered the

guest, taking a sip out of his glass ; 'sound, and of a rare vintage. But I tell ye fairly, Mr. Pousnett, in my opinion there never was the wine bottled could compare with old Glenlivet.'

'There is no Glenlivet in the house,' answered Mr. Pousnett; 'but I have some Bushmills that is beyond dispute. Touch the bell, Charlie, will you?' he said to Mr. Stoddard, who evidently stood high in his good graces. 'No, no, Mr. McCullagh, let me have my way, please. It was stupid of me not to think of it before.'

So the whisky was brought by the butler, who looked as if he had never seen spirits in his life before, and who would—judging from externals—no more have thought of entering a public-house than a bishop might have done. To Robert's great relief both Mr. Pousnett and Captain Crawford 'mixed' for themselves, just, as the gallant officer remarked, to keep Mr. McCullagh company; and when he and Mr. Stoddard declined to join in such wild festivity, the Scotchman made no remark save one disparaging to their heads, repeating at the same time the old advice concerning not sitting with their backs to the fire, or mixing their liquors.

After a time Mr. Stoddard seemed to get very tired of the whole affair, and hinted to Robert they at least could join the ladies. Nothing loth, the manager availed himself of the opening thus afforded, and ascended with his companion to the enchanted regions above blessed with the presence of lovely women.

Ere long Captain Crawford followed their example, and Robert then knew the eventful moment had come. Probably at that instant Mr. Pousnett was breaking the ice. Well, nothing

good would come of it—of so much he felt certain.

In a kind of stupid despair he glanced around the paradise out of which he was to be cast for ever.

The mirrors, the rich hangings, the soft carpets, the deep luxurious easy-chairs, the subdued light, the leaping fire, the pictures, the ornaments, the statuettes, the numberless adjuncts which make up what is called the furniture of a modern drawing-room, mingled all together as in a dream before his eyes. There were the perfumes of flowers too, and the tones of music. These were the surroundings amid which the Pousnetts and thousands like them lived every day; and he, Robert, might have been one of that happy band—not a chief, perhaps, but a happy subordinate—if Heaven had only gifted his father with what the young man mentally styled 'common sense and notions like other people.'

The young ladies played and sang. Mrs. Pousnett from the depths of an armchair addressed at intervals some pleasant remark to a guest she could not but see was ill at ease. Mr. Stoddard and Captain Crawford concentrated their attentions on the daughters of the house, and Miss Vanderton. It was an awful time of suspense to Robert, worse than any quarter of an hour before dinner ever endured by hostess; the minutes went by slowly, coffee was carried round, time passed on at a funereal pace. At last there was the sound of voices on the staircase, the drawing-room door opened, and Mr. McCullagh, followed by Mr. Pousnett, entered the apartment.

Robert looked at his father—he was wonderfully brisk and gay in his demeanour; then his glance travelled to Mr. Pousnett, whose

face wore an expression of the blindest serenity. Mr. McCullagh went direct to the fireplace, and began to talk to his hostess concerning some knitting which she was holding in her taper fingers.

'Why,' she said, laughing, 'it seems to me you know something of everything. Now my husband is unable to tell knitting from netting, and can recognise no difference between crochet and tatting. How is it you understand such matters?'

'I suppose it is because I have aye kept my eyes open,' answered Mr. McCullagh modestly. 'That is a nice song your daughter is singing,' and he turned his head slightly on one side to listen.

'She knows several Scotch ballads,' remarked Mrs. Pousnett suggestively.

'Does she, now?' exclaimed Mr. McCullagh.

'Yes; and she will sing one for you if you ask her.'

'I will do that,' was the eager answer; and Mr. McCullagh moved with the quick sidling walk which was one of his peculiarities towards the grand piano, where Mr. Pousnett already stood conversing in a low tone with Mr. Stoddard.

Miss Pousnett's song finished, Mr. McCullagh preferred his petition. If she could give him just one of the ballads of his native land, he'd be thankful. He could fancy how that lovely voice of hers would sound in 'The Land o' the Lea' or 'A wee bird cam' to my hall-door.'

'I'll sing anything you like that I happen to have, Mr. McCullagh,' replied that young lady pleasantly. ('No saying I canna or I wunna about her,' as Mr. McCullagh explained afterwards.) 'What shall it be? She went on turning over the leaves of a music-book handed to her by

Captain Crawford. 'There are a great many Scottish ballads in this.'

'And Miss Pousnett has been good enough to let me teach her the proper pronunciation,' observed Captain Crawford.

'That's a verra important point,' said Mr. McCullagh gravely.

'How can he go on talking such nonsense,' thought Robert, 'while I am fretting my life out on the hearth-rug?'

Finally a song was selected, one Mr. McCullagh was good enough to tell the company he had not heard for forty years—'Flora Macdonald's Lament'—and forthwith Miss Pousnett commenced her accompaniment, her latest admirer beating time all wrong, as people do beat it with hand and foot and head, the while he kept an appreciative eye on her handsome profile.

Just as she sang the first bar Mr. Pousnett made the slightest possible sign to his manager, and walking towards the conservatory, stood looking at the flowers with apparently absorbed attention till Robert joined him.

'It is best to put you out of your misery at once,' began the great merchant; 'your father won't listen to my proposition.'

'I knew he would not,' said the young man, in an access of despair.

'Well, I thought he would; but I am forced to confess you were right and I wrong. He is a wonderfully clever man, would be a delightful man to do business with, only—'

'He is as obstinate as a pig,' broke in Robert angrily.

'I did not mean to say that,' observed Mr. Pousnett; 'but he is prejudiced—very; and owing, I suppose, to the limited circle in which he has moved, his view, both of men and things, is narrow.'

'I should think so,' agreed Mr.

McCullagh's son, with scornful emphasis.

'I confess I did not believe the man lived who would have been blind to the advantages of a partnership in our house,' went on Mr. Pousnett.

'There is not another man living who would be blind to them but himself,' said Robert.

'However, I feel the matter is at an end now,—that he will never reconsider his decision.'

'No, that he will not,' acquiesced the other mournfully.

'I think you believe I have done all I could for you.'

'I am sure you have, sir; and I can never feel sufficiently grateful for your kindness.'

'Thank you for saying so; it makes what I have to observe not quite so difficult of utterance.'

'Yes, sir,' Robert spoke firmly, but his very heart died away within him.

'It is this,' proceeded Mr. Pousnett, stooping over a rose as he spoke. 'Under present circumstances I shall not be able to keep you on as manager.'

Just what his father had prophesied. In a dumb frenzy the young man stood waiting Mr. Pousnett's further utterance.

'Had I supposed for a moment your father would refuse to help you, I never would have suggested such a thing as a partnership to you, but I cannot now repair that error. I raised your hopes in ignorance of your true position, and I am very sorry for it. I will do my best, and you must do your best, to get a good berth; plenty of firms will be glad to take a person recommended by me; but I cannot keep you on. It would be an awkward position for us both; your own excellent sense will tell you a man who once expected to be partner in a house would never again be quite satisfied with a

subordinate position in it. Just now, perhaps, you may imagine you would be, but I know to the contrary. It is best we should part, and you may rely on my exerting myself to the utmost to get you a situation as good as that you hold now, if not better.'

'Do you wish me to go at once, sir?' asked Robert, in a choking voice.

'At once? Of course not. I have no intention of casting you adrift in that fashion. Only we must part, remember. I have thought it better to say this to you to-night here, rather than to-morrow at the office; and now we won't talk any more about the matter. You look pale; of course this has been a blow to you. Better come down-stairs and have a glass of wine.'

But the discarded clerk would not go down-stairs; in a blind sort of way he determined to remain in paradise till the very last minute.

He felt he might never have another chance of reëntering it, never mix even on the semblance of equal terms again with his employer's family.

'Just as you like,' said Mr. Pousnett, kindly tolerant. 'I cannot tell you how sorry I feel for your disappointment, and how vexed I am with myself for an interference which has ended so disastrously.'

'You are very kind, sir,' murmured Robert; and they returned to the front drawing-room just as Miss Pousnett was ending a second Scottish ballad for the delectation of Mr. McCullagh.

How much longer the concert might have lasted is uncertain but for Mr. Stoddard saying it was really time for him to go, he had no idea it was so late.

Neither Mr. nor Mrs. Pousnett said it was not late or begged him

to remain longer; they took it quite as a matter of course he should leave; and seeing this, Mr. McCullagh followed his lead, and remarked to his son it was time they were thinking about making their way home too; thanked Miss Pousnett for her 'music,' and advanced to bid Mrs. Pousnett good-night.

That lady, with her knitting trailing behind her, met him halfway.

'Must you go, Mr. McCullagh?' she said sweetly, quite pressing his hand as she held it in hers. 'I am so sorry; it has been such a pleasure to see you. I am delighted to have made your acquaintance.'

'I am going too; I will walk with you a little way,' volunteered Captain Crawford, as Mr. McCullagh was about to say good-bye.

Mr. Pousnett went down into the hall with his guests, and, urbane to the last, thanked Mr. McCullagh for coming so far, and hoped he would not take any cold. 'Good-night, Crawford; we shall expect to see you next Monday, of course;' and then the butler held the front door wide, and they passed out into the square, and paradise was left behind, and Robert and his fortunes were pacing the cold wet pavement. It had come on to rain slightly, and the external air, after the genial warmth of Mr. Pousnett's room, felt chill and damp.

But the dull night and the slight drifting rain did not seem to affect Mr. McCullagh's spirits in the least.

He talked to Captain Crawford volubly as they went along.

'Ye'll no forget,' he said at length, 'that ye promised to give me a call. I'd be proud if ye would; and ye shall give me your opinion of what I call

the best whisky that ever came south.'

'I will be sure to come, thank you,' said the Captain politely.

Robert did not shudder now; what did it matter to him who came or who went, who stayed away or stopped? It could not alter his position or make his prospects any brighter.

'My road lies in this direction,' remarked Captain Crawford when they reached Oxford-street, pointing towards the Marble Arch. 'I shall have to bid you good-night now.'

'Good-night, sir,' said Mr. McCullagh, who had taken for the officer one of those singular predilections which at once set reason at defiance, and seem to have no origin in instinct. 'Good-night, and I wish ye weel.'

'I am sure I am very much obliged to you,' replied Captain Crawford; and having so spoken, he took his departure, and the father and son were at last alone.

'We may as well walk on,' observed the elder; 'it's a trifle cold standing at this corner.'

'It is enough to perish one to death,' said Robert.

By the aid of a street-lamp they were passing Mr. McCullagh stole one swift look at his son's face; what he saw in it probably suggested his next remark.

'What a lot of timber they have in those rooms, to be sure!'

'I don't think I quite understand you, sir,' answered his son.

'Furniture—furniture, I mean,' said Mr. McCullagh quickly; 'mahogany's timber and rosewood's timber and ebony's timber, aren't they?'

'Of course,' agreed Robert. 'Yes; I never was in so handsome a house.'

'What a trial it must be to a

man to have such a mountain of a wife always before his eyes' was the next genial observation.

'Mrs. Pousnett is considered a very fine woman,' objected Robert irritably.

'She is a very weighty one, at any rate,' said his father.

The younger man deemed it best to make no comment on this undeniably true statement, and they accordingly walked a few yards further in silence.

'They are a surprisingly pleasant family,' Mr. McCullagh again broke ground. 'I can't recall to mind ever meeting with so many agreeable people living under one roof. I wonder,' he added, 'if they are as pleasant when they are alone.'

'I do not know why they should not be pleasant,' answered Robert, with some asperity, 'when they are all of one mind.'

'I believe ye're right there,'

said his father, with a short laugh.

'I do think they are all of one mind.' Which observation suggested so many disagreeable deductions, that the young man felt thankful to find the omnibus they hailed so full there was only room for one inside, which fact necessitated his climbing to the knife-board.

Nevertheless he insisted on walking with his father home to the very door, though Mr. McCullagh said, 'Hoots! there is no need; no need at all.'

The little attention must have pleased him, however, for he observed at parting,

'I won't ask ye to come in to-night, Robert, for it's late, and ye ought to be in your bed; but if ye can call round in the morning after breakfast, any time before ten, I'd like ye to do so; there is a matter I want to speak a word to ye about.'

(To be continued.)

A GREAT FRENCH ACTOR.

OF the hundreds who witness a theatrical performance, not one in ten, even amongst educated persons, has the least suspicion of the method and the means by which the thing is done. For the vast majority acting is merely another form of improvisation, as far as the personal representation of a character is concerned. The actor has only to learn by heart the words of his part more or less perfectly, dress himself in befitting costume, step on the stage before the public, and the spur of the moment does the rest. Rehearsals are supposed to be held for the purpose of assuring the management and the actors themselves that they can really repeat without book the sentences set down for them; and also of acquainting each actor with what his fellow-players have to say and do, and with the scope and story of the play as a whole when all the separate parts are put together. For so much is known, that many theatrical pieces, new ones especially, exist only in manuscript, and cannot, therefore, pass through the hands of each separate actor, or, even if published in print, are not so readily at hand that every performer can read them just at the moment when he requires to do so. Beyond this the popular mind scarcely penetrates deeper into the mystery of a dramatic performance.

Improvising a part may, indeed, besometimes an unfortunate necessity with second-rate overworked provincial players. When a poor fellow has to personate five, six,

or more different characters during the course of a week, time and physical strength are absolutely wanting to give the preparation which a metropolitan actor would, or ought to, devote to the perfecting of each separate part. No day can by any stretch be made to contain more than four-and-twenty hours; so that, deducting the time occupied by actual work on the stage, including dressing and undressing before and after, the time exacted by indispensable sleep and meals, with a brief interval of outdoor exercise if possible, the remnant left for study is but small. If the words only of his multitudinous parts can be acquired so as to dispense with the prompter's aid, the provincial actor has accomplished a very respectable achievement. The rest must be effected as well as may be, but certainly not so well as might be. True, an old-established actor has his *répertoire*, or stock of parts already learnt and got up, to fall back upon. But the getting those up requires time and leisure, which implies the means of living in some way or another; besides which, even stock parts require refreshing from time to time, otherwise they would slip out of the memory. Unavoidable cases, as those of hard-run actors, certainly do countenance the vulgar error that, the words excepted, the actor's art is all impromptu. Even those cases, however, are fewer than the public supposes. It is often the actor's poverty, and not his will, which consents to improvise. He is unconsciously tutored and

guided in his part by tradition, hearsay, what he has seen others do, and continual association with the members of his craft.

Nevertheless, if people would but think a little, they might see that it is not so very easy a task to represent a dramatic character satisfactorily. They know that a sculptor, before executing a group or even a single figure, considers well beforehand the idea he wishes to express and the best means of expressing it. The statue has existed and been prepared in his imagination before it goes forth to the world in solid marble. They know that a painter, about to depict an event, whether fictitious or historical, makes his sketches, his studies, his compositions, correcting, retouching, refining the work, until the picture which satisfies his aim is finally produced. It is a result of labour, time, and thought.

But the actor is a living statue; he makes himself the leading object in an ever-changing picture. It is not one attitude, or one moment of a story, which must be adequately represented; there should be no falling off, inconsistency, or failure from the beginning to the end of the performance. We may hence make some slight estimate of the thoughtful art and training—not to mention natural qualifications—needed to produce a perfect actor or actress, whose vocation may be regarded as sculpture and painting endowed with vitality and speech.

Sundry examples of diligent preparation for the work are given in M. Legouvé's excellent treatise, *L'Art de la Lecture*, which has already reached more than twenty editions. To his first piece, *Louise de Lignerolles*, in which Mlle. Mars acted, no fewer than sixty-eight rehearsals were devoted. Afterwards Rachel under-

took the part, in which one scene of about thirty lines exacted, both from the actress and the author, three whole hours' study—an excellent example of mutual instruction. The lady's ambition was at least to equal her distinguished predecessor. Therefore there was not a single one of the three or four hundred words composing this scene but was turned over and tried in every sense, in order to hit upon the true and touching accent. Those three hours were really hours of artistic labour.

The same authority supplies another equally striking example. Children, in their unrestrained talk, are natural and interesting; but when they read aloud or recite what they have learned by heart, they immediately become monotonous and dry. In that same piece, *Louise de Lignerolles*, M. Legouvé had written a part for a little girl, which was confided to a graceful and intelligent child only ten years old. At the general rehearsal the little actress did wonders, and a spectator in the orchestra, close to the author, exclaimed, while he applauded her, 'What truth! what simplicity! How easy to see she has not been drilled into that!' But, in reality, during the previous month M. Legouvé had done nothing but tutorise her, intonation by intonation. Was the part, then, beyond her age? By no means. He had even borrowed from his youthful pupil many of those original expressions which children instinctively employ. But when the same expressions were incorporated into her part, when she had to speak instead of talking, they were no longer spoken in a natural tone, and it took a considerable time to bring her back to her natural self and to teach her again what she had

taught her master. Consequently, reading aloud or speaking is so truly an art that it has to be taught again to those who have themselves instructed us.

When quite a little boy, the relative with whom I was staying in London thought that one easy way of filling up my evenings was to stick me every night behind the scenes of Covent Garden Theatre, in a nook where I could witness all that passed without being in anybody's way. The scene-shifters got used to my presence, and would shift me occasionally, when required, but always leaving me in an excellent place. There I saw Miss M. A. Tree's delight at her triple encore for 'Home, Sweet Home'; Charles Kemble's physical exertions to sustain the material weight of Falstaff; and Mrs. Vining's trepidation in an Easter piece, lest she should fail to catch the puppet baby which an eagle had carried off, and was made to let drop. But what I best remember was the careful and conscientious conduct of Mr. Young, at that time playing Hotspur, I think. Instead of remaining in the green-room, to be summoned by the call-boy, he awaited his turn behind the scenes some time before his entrance on the stage was required. There, entirely absorbed in his coming scene, speaking to no one, looking at no one, he paced backwards and forwards, making himself as completely at ease in his costume as if he were walking the streets in his everyday clothes, and repeating in an undertone, but with perfect expression and intonation, the speeches he was about to utter in front of the canvas screen. So that, when the moment for his entrance arrived, he appeared in full and sole possession of his part, ready to give it complete and en-

tire effect, undisturbed by other thought or preoccupation. Comic actors like Duruset the singer might whisper coarse jokes, to put handsome gentlemanly Abbot out, and make him laugh, while repenting, as the would-be wicked Duke, in *Clari, or the Maid of Milan*; but no one ventured to play such a trick with Young, or would have been tolerated had he ventured it.

The minutely detailed life-history, if we could only get at it, and especially the rise, of every great actor, would afford abundant evidence of the laborious effort by which he had climbed up to eminence. In the memoir of Frederick Lemaitre, recently published,* those efforts are taken for granted as a matter of course, rather than insisted on at each step of his career. But from other sources we have ample proof of the thoughtful study by which advancement was secured, and that even when a new character turned out only a half-success, it was through some shortcoming on the part of the author or the subject, and from no lack of due care or other fault of the interpreter. Nor is hard work the only difficulty with which the candidate for dramatic honours has to struggle. In Dumas the Elder's play, *Kean*, there is a scene in which a young lady consults the hero respecting her wish to adopt the theatrical profession. He compares it to a medal stamped with two crowns, one of flowers, the other of thorns. After tracing a sombre picture of the troubles and disappointments to be encountered from the very outset, of the jealousies and intrigues of her rivals, who would stick at nothing to prevent her success, he tells her what she must expect from (of course French) newspaper critics.

* *Souvenirs de Frédéric Lemaitre*.
Publiés par son Fils, avec Portrait. (Paris : Ollendorff 1880.)

'You do not know our journalists,' he says. 'Some, regarding their mission in its honourable aspect, are partisans of whatever is noble, defenders of all that is worthy and good, admirers of everything grand and sublime. Such men are the glory of the press, the precursor angels of the national judgment. But there are others whose impotence to produce anything of their own has driven them to take up the critic's trade. These writers, jealous of everybody and everything, defame what is noble, tarnish what is good, and endeavour to abase whatever is grand.'

Lemaître (whose father was architect to the city of Havre, where he founded a gratuitous school of drawing and architecture) was born there, at noon, on the 11th Thermidor, year VIII. of the French Republic, one and indivisible—which, being interpreted, means on the 28th of July 1800—and was named Antoine Louis Prosper. Frederick, which he afterwards adopted, was the name of his grandfather, for whom he entertained a warm affection. Losing his father by the curious accident of a fall through the prompter's hole in the Havre theatre, he was sent to Paris at eleven years of age, and attended as a day-scholar the Collège Sainte-Barbe. But after the freedom of a seaside life, the confinement of Paris did not agree with him. His mother consulted a doctor, who prescribed amusement and going to the play. A good many boys would cheerfully fall sick, if they were sure of having the same remedy ordered. Frederick was taken to the Ambigu that very evening, and while there resolved to be an actor. Strong resistance was made by his mother, and especially by his grandmother, who urged that, by

going on the stage, he would risk his salvation in the world to come. His uncle Coussin, now the head of the family, took his part. He became ill, and the women yielded, on condition that, while training for the *théâtre maudit*, he should earn a trifle as clerk in some architect's or builder's office. For they were far from rich. The widow Lemaître was obliged to give piano-lessons to live.

By dint of perseverance he obtained admission to the Conservatoire as *élève auditeur*—listening pupil—in the class of Lafon the tragedian, who perceived that the lad was intelligent, but had plenty of hard work before him. He lisped frightfully, with a strong Norman accent; and the best thing he could do for the present, they told him, was to keep his ears and his eyes wide open, which, Lemaître himself remarks, was either very little help, or a very great deal. It turned out to be the latter. He was then earning at a notary's, as under-clerk, *saute-ruisseau*, or skip-kennel, thirty francs a month, which he scrupulously took home, minus a few sous spent on classic authors, or on slipping into the play under the wing of the *claque*, the professional distributors of applause in French theatres.

Most young actors elect to come out in *Hamlet*, *Othello*, or something of the kind. Frederick's first part was the Roaring Lion in *Piramus and Thisbe*, at the Théâtre des Variétés-Amusantes, whose title (like that of the Ambigu-Comique) scarcely described its performances. For instead of the amusing farces which one would expect, it gave serious and heroic pantomimes, such as *Jerusalem Delivered*, the *Siege of Granada*, and the classic love-tale in which our Frederick made his *début*. The circumstances were

not flattering; but it was better to appear even in a four-footed character than to remain for ever, untried and idle, on the shelf.

After playing mute biped parts in *Les Chevaliers de la Mort* and *La Clarinette Enchantée*, he was engaged by Bertrand, then manager of the Théâtre des Funambules, which, by cultivating the Italian style of pantomime, occupied at that time a higher position in the theatrical scale than it afterwards did. He began as a savage in *Harlequin Robinson*; then he was an apothecary's apprentice in *Harlequin hatched out of an Egg*; and so on, until he and the famous Débureau became popular, almost to spoiling, with the public. The part of Count Adolphe, in the *Faux Hermite*, crowned his rising reputation. From that day the ladies always spoke of him as 'handsome Count Adolphe.' 'And the fact is,' he adds, with amusing complacency, 'j'étais très joli'—the italics are his own—'I was very good-looking.'

Having attracted Franconi's notice, he was next engaged at the Cirque Olympique; but between the horses and guns on one side, and the clowns and wild beasts on the other, he found the space assigned to the actors much too narrow. So, the following year, by his teacher Lafon's advice, having been accepted as a *pensionnaire* by the second Théâtre-Français, he exchanged Franconi's French infantry for the Roman infantry of the Odéon. But even there he was not in his element. He listened, as the silent confidant, to Agamemnon's or Orestes's long tirades until the blood boiled in his veins because there was almost nothing for him to say. In this state of suppressed ambition, the offer of an engagement by the managers of the Ambigu-Comique

was eagerly accepted, 'Here at last,' he said to himself, 'is the ground on which I can fairly try my strength.'

He first appeared (March 1823) in a revival of *L'Homme à Trois Visages*, an ordinary melodrama, in which, nevertheless, he achieved an honourable success. Then came several unimportant pieces; and finally the eventful *Auberge des Adrets*, a melodrama of the most sombre and sinister type, intended by its authors to be the horror of horrors. Frederick had to 'create' his part of Macaire, and was puzzled what to do with it. How was he to get the public to accept a coarsely cynical personage, a highway robber and murderer, frightful as the ogre of a fairy tale, who outraged common sense so far as to scratch his whiskers with a dagger while eating a bit of Gruyère cheese?

One evening, while turning over the manuscript of his part, it struck him that all the situations and speeches assigned to Robert Macaire and Bertrand would be exceedingly diverting if treated in a comic vein. He confided the idea to Firmin, a clever fellow, who was equally disgusted at having to personate a tragical Bertrand. Firmin thought the notion sublime. The two conspirators kept their plan a secret, not allowing a hint of it to escape at rehearsal, and it was not until the first performance that an oppressive nightmare was found to be metamorphosed into an irresistible buffoonery. It was received with shouts of delight, and, moreover, drew. The managers made no complaint of a success which they confessed they little expected from the piece; two of the authors were consoled, by the money receipts, for causing roars of laughter instead of showers of tears. A third collaborateur, one Dr.

Polyanthe, vowed never to forgive the actors' treachery. He went about bemoaning to all who would listen that they had 'assassinated' his melodrama. Poor man! It was only a pardonable outburst of paternal affection.

Since the details in the personation of a character and what is called the 'business' of a part are apt to be lost with the disappearance of its first representative, instead of remaining visible for centuries like a picture or a statue, great pains are taken to preserve them by the traditions of the theatre. Thus, the Français boasts that it still perpetuates the tradition of what was done in Molière's time. Discrimination, nevertheless, is desirable and even necessary in the adoption of theatrical precedents. A mere stage accident may be made, by blunderers, to take the place of an accepted tradition, however unmeaning and irrelevant to the point. Here is an instance:

When Frederick was playing Georges, in *Thirty Years of a Gambler's Life*, with Madame Dorval as Amélie, in the third act that lady wore a cap made of lace or some other inflammable material. In the scene where Amélie takes from Georges's hands, to sign it, the deed by which she makes over her dowry to him, Madame Dorval leaned so close to one of the candles standing on the writing-desk that her cap caught fire, and a serious accident was inevitable had not Frederick, without saying a word, instantly torn the cap off the actress's head, extinguished it between his hands, and put it in his pocket. The action was so spontaneous, that Madame Dorval, quite unconscious of its real cause, stared at him with stupefaction.

Those of the audience who had perceived the danger applauded;

and next morning a journal complimented Frederick on his presence of mind, adding that any other actor in his place would have shouted 'Fire!' and called for the engines.

But amongst the spectators who had seen and suspected no more than the action of a man simply snatching off his wife's cap and stuffing it into his pocket was a provincial actor, who, hearing the applause, said to himself,

'That is an effect I should never have thought of!'

Some time afterwards, having to play the *Gambler* in the chief town of one of the Departments, the aforesaid actor took good care not to forget the cap effect. The instant Amélie approached to sign the deed, he violently pulled her cap off her head, and as adroitly thrust it into his coat-tail pocket.

The public, taken by surprise, muttered audibly and looked about uneasily, fearing a case of sudden insanity. The actor, hearing no applause, said to himself, not in the least disconcerted,

'The stupid fools! They don't appreciate it!'

Two days subsequently a subscriber to the theatre, after complimenting him on his remarkable impersonation of Georges de Germany, ventured to ask,

'But why the deuce, in the third act, do you tear off Amélie's headdress and put it in your pocket?'

'Ah, you do not understand!'

'Not the least in the world.'

'Why, it is one of Frederick's most powerful effects!'

'One of Frederick's effects!' exclaimed the subscriber. 'Well, certainly I should never have suspected it!'

And that is how some few traditions arise. Frederick never made a goose of himself in that way, because he was original and

inventive, copying no one, and could give a good artistic reason for the slightest item in the composition of a part.

Chance or destiny gave Frederick, as partner in his numerous creations, Mdlle. Sophie Hallignier, whose rare qualities, &c.—the elegance and dignity of her figure, the sculptural curve of her shoulders, her Grecian head, her multitudinous other charms—were all that a lover delights to describe. Mdlle. Hallignier successfully played with him the *Diamant*, the *Remords*, the *Cocher de Fiacre*, *Lisbeth, ou La Fille du Laboureur*, and finally the *Vieil Artiste*, a melodrama in three acts, by Frederick himself, in which she filled the part of his daughter, expressly written for her. Their daily inter-

course led him to reflect that he was much too young to remain always her father. She, too, on her part, confessed that she felt no repugnance to change her *emploi* or line of characters for one more congenial and sympathetic. Two months afterwards he led her to the church of the Petits-Pères, where, and at the evening ball, they would have been honoured by an artistic assembly worthy of a princely wedding but for the occurrence of a sad event—namely, the death of Talma that same day.

And now, having married our hero, like the novelists, we land him there, leaving the reader to pursue his future career in the *Souvenirs*, published by his son.

A SAILOR'S YARN.

Through Smythe's Channel, Straits of Magellan.

HOMEWARD bound ! What a thrill of delight does the old tune wake in our hearts ! The sailors at the capstan trudge round to its familiar strains as they have not done these four weary years ; for are not our orders for England on board ! and homesick west-country bluejackets remind one another, as they heave with a will, that we are to be at Plymouth in seventy days.

The captain of the maintop, bending his gaunt form across a hatchway, accosts our smallest midshipmite :

' Beg yer pardon, sir ; but how far might we be from Devonport !'

' Not much more than 8000 miles,' squeaks the youngster, hugely delighted that his opinion should be asked ; and with a satisfied ' Thank'ee, sir,' and touch of his forelock, the gigantic ruler of topmen resumes his work, humming to himself the while, to the not very mellifluous lucubrations of our blind fiddler :

' When we gets safe to Plymouth docks
The pretty girls comes down in flocks,
And each to one another says they,
" Here's Jack come home with four years' pay."

Clink, clink ! sounds the cable in the hawsepipe. ' Heave and away, sorr !' shrieks the little Irish boat-swain from his perch forward ; and so we weigh anchor and shape our course for the Southern Seas. Our homeward track from the Pacific will take us into a corner of the world about which English society seems strangely ignorant. The average 'well-informed' Briton, if confronted with questions as to the topographical features, the cli-

mate, or the means of existence, religion, government, and economy of the races scattered over the thousands of square miles adjacent to Smythe's Channel, will, perhaps, at first vaguely generalise, but in the end be compelled to admit himself supremely ignorant of them all.

Such, at least, was the condition of the present writer, until brought face to face with the glorious mountain scenery which is the distinctive feature of this district. For the benefit of those who may be in a similar predicament, be it observed that, between the archipelago of closely-packed islands which stretch from Cape Penas to the Straits of Magellan and the mainland, winds for nearly six hundred miles an intricate channel. Few Europeans have explored it, and none have attempted to reside there, or open up a trade with its wild inhabitants. The aboriginal Patagonians (a scanty race not unlike the North American Indians, but still lower in the scale of humanity) are left to fight their battle for existence, unmolested by the 'civilisation' and 'fire-water' of the paleface, which have wrought such havoc with the unhappy red man. The line of mail-steamers to the Pacific avoid it, dreading its sinuous turnings, rushing currents, and misty weather. Its channel, too, in some places barely two hundred yards wide, renders it impassable to sailing vessels, so that until the introduction of steam the adjoining district was almost *terra incognita*.

But to the navigator who is willing to take the risks, it offers smooth water, and an immunity from those fearful storms which have made the weather in the vicinity of Cape Horn a byword amongst sailors; and as such we chose it.

Our cruise down the western coast of South America, from Coquimbo to the Gulf of Penas, is devoid of incident; the two all-important factors, storm and shipwreck, being luckily wanting to give their special interest to the voyage. Towards the evening of the tenth day, land is sighted right ahead, and it is definitely settled that, weather permitting, we shall enter Smythe's Channel the following morning. So we adjust compasses and re-examine charts, and at early dawn stand in for the entrance to the channel.

As we draw towards the coast, the towering masses of granite, of which it is composed, become more clearly defined. The mighty Pacific swell has eaten through the smaller crags, lapping as it seems the very foot of the Andes. Huge mountains, rising sheer out of the sea, shut in the view ahead, their bases clad in forests of firs; above, the bald, gray, or lichen-covered rock, and with summits yet deep in winter snow. Albatrosses, resting sleepily on the oily water, start up as we approach, and sea-lions snort defiance at us. But a fleecy mist hanging round the bases of the cliffs augurs badly for our progress to-day, at least if it increases. It is a curious sensation, this slipping along at considerable speed, straight towards an iron-bound coast; for, as yet, no entrance to the strait is visible.

Just as we are beginning to think we have missed the channel altogether, the bluff outstanding mass of verdure on the left, which had hitherto appeared part and

parcel of the mainland, opens out from the rest, disclosing a watery avenue on which the rising sun glints cheerily. As we watch it the ialet assumes more and more the form of a huge broad-brimmed hat, and we recognise Sombrero Island and the entrance to Smythe's Channel.

The low-lying fog threatens every instant to settle across our path, debarring further progress, so we push on at speed. By eight a.m. the land has closed in on either hand to such a degree that an error in a turn of the helm may put us on the rocks. Suddenly the mists descend, enveloping the ship in a soft impalpable rain, and limiting our vision to fifty yards all round. To stop the engines is the work of an instant; and so we lie a log upon the waters for nearly twenty minutes, all hands on the look-out for the land which we know is only too close. At last the fog lifts, just in time to enable us to wriggle from an unpleasant propinquity to the western shore; and unveiling a magnificent stretch of water, with lofty snow-capt mountains on either side, as far as we could see.

On the flat outlying rocks, within a stone's throw of the ship, some seals are basking; the wash of the screw as we move the engines disturbs them; the sleek bullet heads are raised for an instant, the next with a simultaneous flop they disappear.

So the day wears on, each turn of the channel disclosing fresh views of a savage grandeur which is almost awful. Sometimes, where the channel narrows and the mountains tower highest, a bridge of cloud forms overhead, making the water round us inky black, and giving a weird cavern-like appearance to our path in front. Then we emerge again, and the fickle sunlight falls on

pleasant valleys and slopes of open country, with deep luxuriant grass, and scattered clumps of timber, among which guanaco and dappled fallow deer are feeding. Flocks of wild geese pass over our mastheads, craning their long necks curiously from side to side, in wonder at the infrequent sight.

Towards noon we enter the most intricate part of the channel, English Narrows, and for two hours our whole attention is absorbed in the delicate operation of steering our vessel through them. These once passed, Indian Reach, although by no means simple navigation, seems broad by comparison; but here, as well as everywhere in this badly surveyed locality, a vigilant look-out is, as we subsequently found to our cost, necessary to avoid dangers unmarked on the chart.

It is with a feeling of relief to our highly strung nerves, therefore, that we observe the entrance to Port Grappler, and, changing our course, glide round a tiny islet so close that the trees overhanging the water almost touch the ship, and drop anchor in a fairy basin among the mountains.

Before the echoes of the rushing cable have died away among the hills, sportsmen are off to try for snipe and wild-duck. Pulling ashore through fields of kelp and seaweed, we make for a tiny cascade at the upper end of the harbour, and land on a beach of rough boulders, with marsh and rushes in between, from which at every step the snipe get up.

The banging that ensues, multiplied by the echoes, would do credit to a Volunteer company skirmishing, and at first the bag fills rapidly.

Two of our number, more ambitious than the rest, force their way through the marshy land to where the hills rise abruptly, hop-

ing, perhaps, to get a shot at deer or guanaco. They agree to fire three shots in succession from the waterside as a signal when they want the boat sent on shore for them; and so we wish the enthusiasts adieu.

We who stop behind have good sport amongst the fens, and return on board in the gloaming after a four hours' tramp, mostly over our boots in water, thoroughly tired, and quite ready for dinner. Counting the bag, we have nineteen couple of snipe, three brace of ducks, two geese, and a teal; a sum-total with which we are quite content.

As the gloom deepens, and no shot is heard from the shore, some little anxiety is felt for our 'deer-stalking' messmates; but an overpowering sleepiness and the thoughts of the morning watch conquer all my misgivings, and I turn in.

Alas for my night's rest! I seem barely to have been asleep half an hour when a gruff voice outside my cabin-door informs me that it is 'Twelve o'clock, sir; officer of the watch's compliments, sir, which Lieutenant Fyson 'e ain't fetched on board yet, sir, which you'll have to keep 'is watch for 'im, sir.'

With a growl not loud but deep at the prospect of this midnight vigil, and a strong tendency to swear at our truant messmates, I hasten on deck.

It is raining hard and very foggy; and the first gust of wind, as it whistles down from the snows above us, turns all my annoyance into profound apprehension for the well-being of the unfortunate votaries of the chase exposed to its icy blasts, without shelter, on such a night as this.

The face of the officer of the watch whom I relieve reflects my

fears; neither he nor the look-outs have seen or heard anything from the shore, and he dreads the worst. But to attempt to search the hills in this black darkness would be worse than useless, and so he dives below, and I am left in undisputed charge of the ship.

Even in that land-locked harbour the blustering wind has raised a slight swell, and the vessel lurches over from side to side with an uneasy creaking.

The two middies of the watch, having, as they consider, discharged their duty by bringing me up a basin of steaming cocoa, go through the formula of asking permission to read in the chart-house, and are soon sitting back to back, each with his book on his knees, deep in the arms of Morpheus.

I trudge wearily round the upper deck, cautioning the look-outs to be specially careful to report any lights on shore, examining the cables, and finally resume my beat on the quarter-deck.

Gradually my suspicions that my waterproof, so trusty four years ago, is failing me at last, and leaking, are merged in the certainty that I am thoroughly wet to the skin, and then, but not till then, the rain ceases. The squalls become less heavy, and finally die away, and at half-past three the clouds drift asunder, and the moon shines out on a still night.

Suddenly a look-out comes trotting aft on tiptoe of excitement.

'I seed mun, zurr, I seed mun straik a light to yonder by the water-side!'

Half a minute's careful watching satisfies us that there is a light burning dimly on shore in the direction he indicates.

Our departure is appointed for five A.M., and it wants but five minutes to four. An hour is but a short interval in which to search

the bush for the wanderers; so I resolve to take a boat on shore immediately.

Leaving one of the midshipmen in charge of the ship, I step into the boat as eight bells is struck, and make for land as rapidly as twelve pairs of stalwart arms can propel me.

At first we seem to have struck upon an *ignis fatuus*; the coxswain of the boat declares he can see nothing; and only now and then, and faintly, do I distinguish a red glow reflected on the tree-trunks. Ten minutes' pull, however, brings us near enough to set all doubts at rest; and another quarter of an hour lands us among the coarse grass and rushes on shore.

Strict orders are given for no man to leave the boat; and with a couple of volunteers the search is commenced lantern in hand. Groping our way over stones and stumps of fallen timber, seldom all three on our legs together, we quickly near the light, and reach it, to be disappointed and amused at the same time.

The source of the glow is a fire of logs kindled under the shelter of an upturned canoe. Stretched between the boat and a rude scaffolding of poles is a *tente d'abri* of coarse matting; and sprawling round the fire, in attitudes the reverse of picturesque, are some half-dozen natives.

Paterfamilias, perceiving our approach, has sprung up, and is screeching some unintelligible gibberish at his somnolent offspring, while he casts about him for his bow. No time is to be lost if we wish to avoid a practical proof of his skill as an archer, so we make a simultaneous onslaught upon the unhappy child of the forest.

'We don't mean yer no 'arm!' vociferates the burly coxswain; but the poor wretch only strug-

gles the more, convinced that his last hour has come.

Meanwhile, the hideous brood are upon us; and, for a few seconds, our position, assailed right and left by the gentle daughters of Eve and a squalling progeny, is far from enviable. At last, however, a chaw of baccy from my pouch quiets them, and we sit down round the embers to palaver. It is no easy task to describe the sublime ugliness of these unfortunate mortals. Spare, wizen, monkey-like, squatting among the damp fern and limp half-cured deerskins which form their unsavoury bed-place, how immeasurably better off are the beasts of the forest than they! Despite the coldness of the weather, they are but thinly clad; and poor shivering burnt-umber coloured humanity proclaims itself from many a rent in their scanty garments.

While I moralise thus, an ingenious code of explanatory signs, verbal gymnastics, and the deaf and dumb alphabet, is being exercised by my companions, in the vain hope of extracting some news of our shipmates from mine host.

Just as we are on the point of giving up the endeavour in despair, a rustling in the bush above transfixes us; and soon, to my intense relief, the 'deer-stalkers' crawl into the encampment, more dead than alive.

Instinctively we grasp their ice-cold hands and draw them to the fire, with incoherent words of welcome and congratulation; and then, before another sentence is uttered, a liberal 'drop of the creathure' is administered on medicinal grounds.

Somewhat revived by its cheering influence, the 'patients' stretch their half-starved limbs before the warmth, and proceed to recount their adventures.

It is the old story. Having fired at and, as they believed, wounded a deer, they had followed him, on and on through the woods, taking no heed of the fast-falling night. After wading torrents, splashing through marshes, and scaling precipices until they were tired out and every cartridge was wet, they had found themselves in the gloom of the primeval forest, some four miles from the ship and without matches, at eight o'clock at night.

In attempting to return in the darkness they had narrowly missed breaking their necks; and after weary marching and counter-marching, slipping down water-courses, and stumbling at every step over obstacles formidable in the daylight, and doubly dangerous at night, they had been fain to take refuge under a projecting rock, fearing to move lest worse things befell them.

But the icy blasts soon admonished them to be moving if they did not wish to be frozen to death; and so they had spent the night, sometimes wandering aimlessly on at the imminent risk of their necks, sometimes crouching together under the lee of a bush, until they had spied the Indians' encampment. And being here, they very roundly swore that never, no, never, would they risk such another night in the forest. Torn, bleeding, hungry, dazed with the cold and darkness, they certainly presented a pitiable appearance; and I am inclined to think they will keep their vow.

For half an hour more we sit talking over the fire; the horrific grunts of mine host and his two spouses more than ever convincing us that we have fallen among harmless, but hopeless, maniacs.

The first streaks of morning are in the eastern sky as we bid them adieu; and as we stumble away

through the doubtful gray light, the strident tones of the savage are heard addressing a few words to his wives, of which we easily conceive the import.

So we reach the boat, and arrive on board just in time to hear the order, 'Hands shorten in cable.' Soon the anchor is tripped, and we are softly stealing out of harbour; a shrill screech as we pass the Indian encampment bids us farewell, and the little bay is left for perhaps another decade to its pristine solitude. The day is bright and fine, and our artist-soul is stirred to try and transfer some faint representation of the views through which we are passing to canvas. With some such idea we are on deck all the morning 'sketching from Nature.' Would that I could give the reader a notion of the matchless panorama through which we are moving. Word-painting must always be incomplete and unsatisfactory where the object of it is, beyond words, beautiful — else imagine all that is most glorious in the clifly Hebrides, of dancing water, seaweed-covered rock, and hanging wood, enhanced by the mysterious blue which distant hills and eternal snows give to Alpine scenery. Alternate these with park-like tracts, such as Thames meanders through between Iffley and Cookham, but without the stiffness begotten of hedge-row and chessboard squares of turnips, and perhaps a faint conception of the pictures we would fain be drawing may be formed.

'Kelp right ahead, sir!' sings out a voice from the masthead; and simultaneously there is a

grating noise under the bows, a sudden shock, which upsets my easel, and the nose of the ship slides upwards upon a sunken shoal, where the chart says thirty fathoms. Before we have time to realise the gravity of the situation the engines are racing full speed astern, and we have the satisfaction of seeing that she is moving off. She leaks slightly, but is otherwise little damaged, and we resume our journey—with diminished confidence in the charts, and at a very slow speed, however.

As the latitude increases, bergs and floating fields of ice add a new danger to the voyage; and whales are seen more frequently.

On, through Icy Reach, Innocentes Channel, and Guia Narrows, until late in the evening Puerto Beuno affords us a berth for the night. Here such a draught of cod and whiting is caught as keeps the ship's company in fresh fish for a week.

Two more days' hard steaming brings us to Magellan Straits, which are too well known to need description. The weather is too cold now for comfort, and we don our winter garb, and make all snug for the wilder Atlantic waves which we are soon to enter.

Summing up our impressions of Smythe's Channel, we conclude that, to the artist, the sportsman, the lover of free Nature for her own sake, or the man of science, the adjoining districts offer a new and glorious field for exploration; but to the merchant or man of business as such, it is to be feared that they will long remain of very doubtful value.

THE DON DONE.

A Cambridge Ballad.

THE Reverend Septimus Benjamin Snorter
Was a Peterhouse don of the very worst water.
His parents (of course they were 'honest, though poor')
Took in washing to keep the grim wolf from the door.
Huge were the talents which Benjy had shown
At an age when, to some children, books are unknown:
His schoolmaster's pride, and his playmates' aversion,
In learning a Solon, in habits a Persian.

Multiplication and subtraction;
Every sort of vulgar fraction;
Stocks, shares, practice, and proportion;
Birectangular contortion;
Pure, but nasty, mathematics;
Hyperbolic hydrostatics;—
All were swallowed down like water
By the infant S. B. Snorter.

Soon the reputation spread in the vicinity
Of this fact-devouring, boy-pedant divinity;
And dwellers by his native stream him planned to banish from it,
Fearing sudden conflagration by this intellectual comet.

So the hat was sent round,
And subscriptions were found

Sufficient to send Master Snorter to college;
Though there were some who thought
The asylum rates ought

To accommodate gratis such sufferers from knowledge.

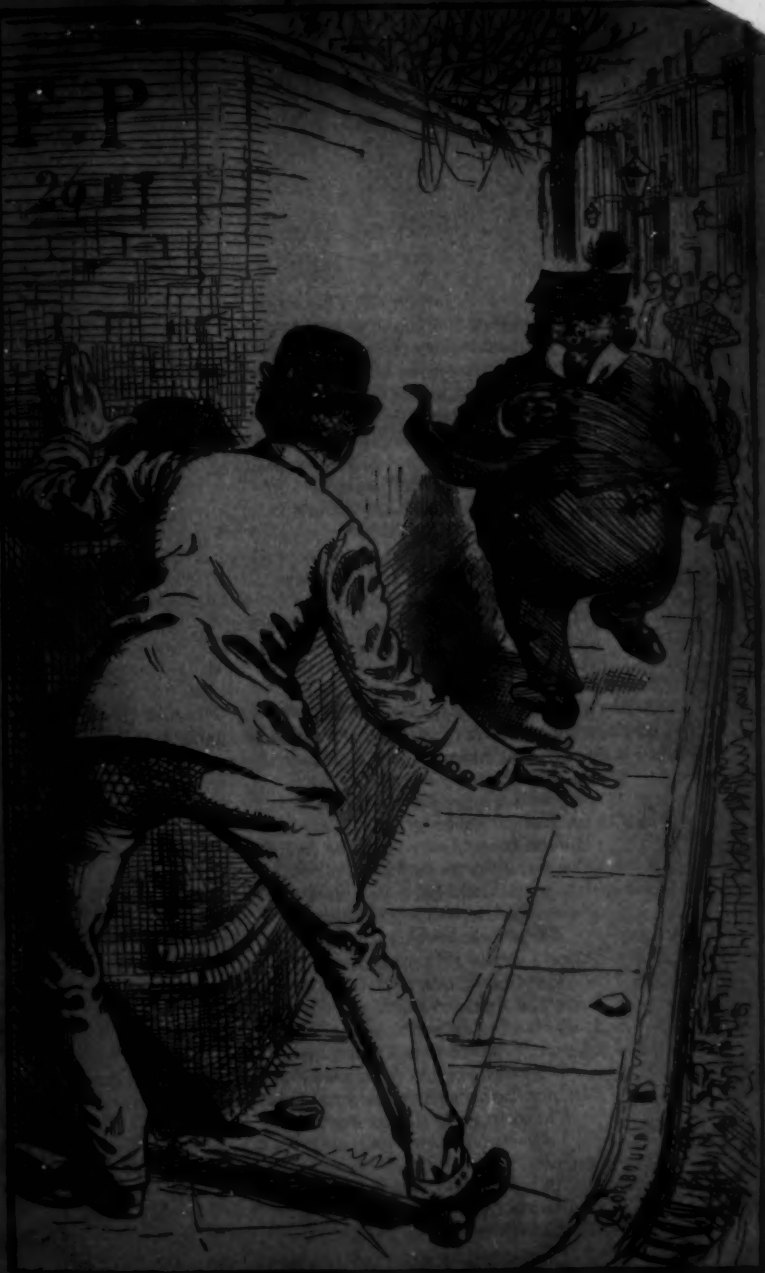
Never boating, seldom walking,
Never fives or cricket playing;
Always at the Union talking;

Very rarely ever straying
From the limits of the town,
Duly clad in cap and gown.

Chance or luck had never led him
Where the eights in measured time,
Flashing oars and hard-held rudders,
Churn to foam the ancient slime.

Fat he grew on tawny port, and
Steaming 'goes of something short,' and
What he called 'Perry Jouvier,' but undergrads call 'Cham';
And our hero little thought he
Would find himself at forty

Near the elongated cesspool by geographers termed Cam.



THE DON DONE.

See the Point.

Recommended by his doctor
To become the Senior Proctor,
And, with bulldogs* twain attending,
To follow, slyly wending,
Unsupplied with academicals, the wary undergrad;
He had singled out his victim,
Who by accident had kicked him
In a town-and-gown November row with Barnwell's burly cad.
Looking round, the victim stated
To the Proctor isolated
(For the bulldogs were both occupied some four-and-twenty deep),
That he really thought he couldn't—
Or, if he could, he wouldn't—
Try a customer so wary to come upon asleep.
'I have seen you pant and waddle
As you take your dinner toddle,
And as for really running, why, I hardly think you can;
And you can't, you wise old schoolman,
Be so like a common fool, man,
So brutelike, so unmanly, as to chase a brother man.'
Now the Proctor was on duty,
And, on being called a brute, he
Looked round him for assistance, and, seeing none, stood mute;
Then, though twenty years the older,
Flung his gown from off his shoulder,
Pressed his cap down on his forehead, and started in pursuit.
He bethought him of Coræbus,
That light of foot ephebus,
Whose running so completely knocked all others out of date,
That the whole Athenian nation,
Overcome with admiration,
Set their calendar anew by him for purposes of state.†
'Fast, fast with heels wild spurning'
The undergraduate fled;
Round the corners deftly turning,
Always twenty yards ahead;
And the crowds all split asunder,
Incredulous with wonder.
Even lack of academicals caused no one any fears;
They rejoiced, with feelings venomy,
To see their common enemy
Take to running on compulsion now first for forty years.
No policeman seemed to mind them,
And the bulldogs failed to find them,
As they left the town behind them
And riverward both ran;
Where the path was wet and greasy,
And the Proctor very wheezy,
So that running was not easy
To that now repentant man.

* Twin satellites, in human form, of the Proctors, or University police.

† The Olympiads, or time-measures of Athenian history, date from the victory of one Coræbus in foot-racing, in a.c. 776.

Have you ever chased a plover
 Feigning lameness near the cover,
 Which she hopes her little chickens may attain to unperceived?
 So the Proctor, bent on bagging,
 Thought he saw his victim lagging,
 And a single-handed victory within his grasp believed.
 But, as they neared the ferry
 Of an ancient man and wherry,
 Responding to the signals of the victim, was he 'ware;
 And the don, revived with rapture,
 Planned a most dramatic capture,
 A sort of imitation of the famous Trent affair.
 Every nerve straining,
 Rapidly gaining,—
 Less grew the gap between hunted and hunter;
 Each from his distance
 Makes signs for assistance
 By means of the punt and its wondering punter.
 'Here, Charon, I'm willing
 To give you a shilling
 To take me alone!'—and the prey is on board.
 'Hi! you on the water—
 I'm—Mr. B. Snorter—
 The Proctor!'—the boat had pushed off from the sward.

The Reverend Septimus stood there alone,
 His bulldogs, his breath, and his quarry were gone;
 The boat was moored fast on the opposite side,
 No voice to his cries and entreaties replied.
 How to find his way back he knew not at all;
 He was too late for chapel, and too late for hall.
 Each public-house, even when come to, was shut—
 He slept for the night, one of ten, in a hut;
 And in the dim morning, unfed and unshaven,
 Found shelter in shame in his own college haven.
 He resigned his appointment as Proctor at once,
 And resolved on a mean betwixt pedant and dunce:
 In less than a week from that 5th of November,
 He had his name down as an honorary member
 Of the cricket and boat clubs; he gave up his port,
 And became (for a don) an 'uncommon good sort.'
 He died in his rooms; and, having no son, he
 Bequeathed to the victim the whole of his money,
 'In grateful remembrance' (so ran the bequest)
 'Of a day which first taught me *mens sana* was best
In corpore sano; acute, not obtuse,
 To see in a don's life its use and abuse.'

CODDENHAM.

FORTUNES MADE IN BUSINESS.

XXII.

MR. S. C. LISTER.

On Saturday the 15th of May 1875, the Right Hon. W. E. Forster stood up in one of the public parks of Bradford, the centre of an immense concourse of people, and there unveiled a marble statue erected by subscription to commemorate the industrial achievements of Mr. Samuel Cunliffe Lister. The honour thus conferred was a very exceptional one, inasmuch as the statue was erected during the lifetime of its subject, and was a genuine expression of gratitude on the part of a large section of the manufacturing community for benefits derived from Mr. Lister's invention and enterprise. Away from his own field of operation the world knew little of Mr. Lister, deep as the impression was that he had made on England's productive power in the forty years of his devotion to the worsted and silk industries. 'I doubt, after all,' said Mr. Forster, on unveiling Mr. Lister's statue, 'whether we are come here to do honour to Mr. Lister so much as to do honour to ourselves. We wish to do honour to those working faculties which have made our country of England a practical, and therefore a great and prosperous, and a powerful country. It is this untiring unrelenting industry which Mr. Lister possesses, this practical understanding, this determination to carry out any object which he is convinced ought to be carried out, and his determination to fear no opposi-

tion and to care for no obstacle: it is these practical faculties that have made England what she is. What is it especially that we are honouring? It is the pluck which this man has shown; it is the feeling that, having to do with the worsted trade, he said to himself, "Here is something which ought to be done; I will not rest until I have found out how it can be done; and having found out how it can be done, where is the man who shall stop me doing it?" Now, it was upon that principle that he fought his long struggle; and so when we read the story of his struggles, ever since 1842, in his two great inventions, we raise this statue to the man who has successfully fought the battle, and hope that our sons and the sons of all, rich and poor together, will come in after days to admire it, not merely because it gives them the form and features of a rich and successful man, but because it gives them the form and features of a man who was endowed with industry, with intellect, with energy, with courage, with perseverance; who spared himself no pains in first ascertaining the conditions of the problems he had to solve, and then whose heart never faints, whose will never relaxes, in determining to carry out those conditions.'

Mr. Lister's life has been spent amongst inventions. He has registered more patents than any other man in England, and in

carrying out improvements in machinery, of one kind and another, has spent fortune upon fortune; always, however, holding on until success has been won, when his outlay has come back to him fourfold. His career has been marked by two leading episodes. The first portion of his history is prominently associated with the perfecting and bringing into operation of the woolcombing-machine, at which he laboured with unswerving devotion for many years; the second period of his commercial life has been concerned in the invention of machinery for the manipulation of silk waste, theretofore treated as refuse, but now made the basis of many beautiful fabrics in velvets, silks, plush, and other kindred materials. Several hundred thousand pounds were expended by Mr. Lister in respect of the woolcombing-machine before it yielded him a penny; but when once it reached a practicable shape and came to be accepted by the trade, the return he obtained for his labour was on a scale so princely as to put the gains of all previous inventors into the shade. Mr. Lister received as much as 1000*l.* per machine as patent right. Then, in regard to the silk-waste manufacture, his experience has been much the same. Mr. Lister was 360,000*l.* out of pocket by his operations in this direction; indeed, he wrote off a quarter of a million as entirely lost before he began to make up his books again. Still, in 1865, he found himself sole master of the position—possessed of a valuable invention and without a competitor, English or foreign.

To tell the story of Mr. Lister's life from the time when, while yet a mere youth, he entered upon a commercial existence, to the period when, at the last general election, he was prevailed upon

to come before one of the great county constituencies as a parliamentary candidate still in commercial harness, would be to tell the history of two important branches of our textile industries. We cannot attempt to do more than give the rough outlines of such a career.

Mr. Lister was born in the Waterloo year at Calverley Hall, near Leeds, being descended from one of the old county families, the Listers of Manningham. When Mr. Lister was some two or three years old, his father, Mr. Ellis Cunliffe Lister, removed to the family mansion of the Listers, Manningham Hall, and at this seat Mr. S. C. Lister continued to reside for nearly half a century. When Bradford became a parliamentary borough in 1832, Mr. Ellis Cunliffe Lister, in conjunction with Mr. John Hardy, father of the present Viscount Cranbrook, was elected M.P. The position of the family was such that, although Mr. S. C. Lister was but a fifth son, it was never imagined he would adopt a commercial career. In fact, a very different destiny had been marked out for him. From his boyhood he had been taught to regard the Church as his future field of labour, and he was educated with this view. To make this course still more definite, his grandmother bequeathed him the Rectory of Addingham, on the express condition that he should take holy orders.

It was not to be, however. The world was just then full of 'mighty workings': the steam-god was revolutionising the industrial world, the picturesque valleys of the West Riding were fast becoming dotted with towering factory chimneys, the spirit of invention was everywhere abroad, and the heart of young Lister

throbbed with strong yearnings as he saw all these signs of activity spreading around him, and he longed to make one of the great army of workers. It must have been a source of infinite sorrow to the family to find that their efforts to train up a pillar of the Church from one of their number were doomed to failure, and that he had determined to 'soil his hands with trade.' But, conscious of what was within him, S. C. Lister made his resolve and stuck to it; and the result has been, not that he has tarnished the lustre of an ancient name, but that he has given a brightness to it that centuries of simple county magnates could not have equalled.

Mr. Lister was educated at a school on Clapham Common, and then, instead of passing forward to the University, as it was at first intended he should have done, he obtained a position in the counting-house of Messrs. Sands, Turner, & Co., Liverpool. While holding this appointment, Mr. Lister made several voyages to the United States, where he made himself well acquainted with what was going on in the shape of invention and enterprise. Those were the days of sailing vessels, and trips across the Atlantic were looked upon as something extraordinary; so Mr. Lister got some little fame for his knowledge of American affairs, his friends alluding to him generally as 'American Sam.'

When Mr. Lister came of age he prevailed upon his brother, Mr. John Cunliffe Kaye, to enter into business with him at Manningham. Their father built them a mill, and there the future inventor of the woolecombing-machine first came into contact with the thousand and one yet unsolved problems of the worsted trade. Power-looms had been in use in this manufacture some ten

years, and the spirit of opposition with which their introduction had been met had now, to a great extent, subsided. Still there was an immense amount of hand-labour retained in the preparatory stages of the manufacture, the hand-wool-combers, amongst other operatives, forming a large and important section of the industrial community. Often, as he watched these men at their work in their homes, and observed the unhealthy nature of their employment—the work having to be done in heated rooms, amidst the fumes of oil and charcoal—Mr. Lister must have said to himself, 'I will give my mind to accomplishing this by the aid of machinery.' Mr. Kaye only remained a partner for about two years, retiring on the death of his brother, Mr. W. C. Lister. Not long afterwards Mr. S. C. Lister gave himself up to the work with redoubled vigour, taking into partnership Mr. James Ambler. For a few years the Manningham business went steadily on, Mr. Lister gradually feeling his way into the different branches of the manufacture, carrying on both the spinning and weaving operations.

Thus matters went on quietly and successfully, until Mr. Lister got the necessary prompting to take the field as an inventor from having his attention directed to a combing-machine which Mr. George Edmund Donisthorpe was trying to work out. Many other inventors had tried their hands upon such an apparatus before Mr. Donisthorpe, but without obtaining any valuable result, and at that very time other inventors were at work in France and America trying to solve this problem. No wonder this was the case, when we come to consider the magnitude of the prize which awaited the man who could first

really solve it. Combing was one of the chief operations in the various textile manufactures, and the inventor who achieved the perfect machine might reckon upon drawing countless thousands from the cotton and worsted lords of the North. But all these efforts of inventors, all these attempts to produce a machine that should comb wool as well as it was combed by hand, were regarded with scepticism and suspicion. Spinners could not be brought to take an interest in the thing, and as for the woolcombers themselves, they simply laughed at the idea of any one presuming to imagine that their labours could ever be effectually superseded by machinery: they might spin and weave by machinery; but the manipulation of the fleeces by the combs was, they thought, altogether too delicate a process to be successfully accomplished by mechanical contrivance. When it became known, however, that 'American Sam' had taken the combing-machine in hand, some of them began to sing a different tune, for already Mr. Lister, young as he was, had achieved a reputation for shrewdness and tenacity of purpose.

Mr. Lister was quick to perceive that in Mr. Donisthorpe's invention there was the germ of such a machine as would entirely abolish the hand-comber, so he made him an offer for it, which was accepted. He then took Mr. Donisthorpe into partnership, and, with their interests united and their skill concentrated on this one object, they thenceforward worked together with patience and diligence, until eventually they succeeded in bringing out a machine which gained the acceptance of the trade. What weary vigils there were, what days of toil and thought and anxiety,

what an accumulated expenditure of money, before that vantage-ground was reached! 'For twenty years,' said Mr. Lister on one occasion, 'I was never in bed at half past five in the morning.' Mr. Lister gave all his fortune to the project, as well as all his time and all his energy.

Having seen Messrs. Lister & Donisthorpe before the public with a combing-machine that was capable of doing all that had previously been done by the hand-combers, it will be well to glance at what had been done, and was being done, by others in the same field. Dr. Cartwright, the inventor of the powerloom, took out a patent for wool-combing by machinery so far back as the year 1790, but it never got into practical use. A Mr. Robert Ramsbotham, some three or four years later, erected a combing-machine in Bradford. He appears to have experimented with it until he became convinced that there was nothing to be made out of it, and it is related that he at last had it carted away, taking his hat off to it as it disappeared, and wishing it good-day. Messrs. Platt & Collier introduced a new combing-machine in 1827, which was a great improvement upon anything of the kind that had, up to that time, been invented; still, it did not answer its purpose altogether, and found but little favour in the trade. The most important worker in this direction, however, was a Frenchman, Joshua Heilmann. Heilmann was a native of Alsace, and was brought up to the cotton trade. After spending some time in Paris, acquiring a good store of mechanical knowledge, he went to Vieux-Thann, and took charge of a cotton factory there for some of his relatives. He invented several improved machines, and was decorated with

the Legion of Honour. At length he conceived the idea of inventing a combing-machine, and became so absorbed in this one project that he lost all taste for other work, and fell into the depths of poverty. Mr. Smiles has told us and Mr. Elmore has pictured for us how, one night, while Heilmann was sitting by his hearth, 'meditating upon the hard fate of inventors and the misfortunes in which their families so often become involved, he found himself almost unconsciously watching his daughters combing their long hair and drawing it out at full length between their fingers. The thought suddenly struck him that if he could successfully imitate in a machine the process of combing out the longest hair, and forcing back the short by reversing the action of the comb, it might serve to extricate him from his difficulty. . . . Upon this idea he proceeded, introduced the apparently simple but really most intricate process of machine-combing; and after great labour he succeeded in perfecting the invention.' How far Heilmann's ideas clashed with those of Mr. Lister and Mr. Donisthorpe, and who was first in the field, may best be gathered from Mr. Lister's own words. Speaking at a public dinner a few years ago on trade subjects, and referring more particularly to some remarks which had been made in regard to his woolcombing inventions, he said, 'I have received, perhaps, more than my fair share of credit for that machine. I have always wished to do justice to those associated with me; and Mr. Donisthorpe and myself were, I consider, the parties who mastered the difficulty. I am not jealous as to the antagonism of English inventors; but I am anxious that Englishmen should have the credit of the in-

vention. Some people have put Mr. Heilmann forward as the inventor of the combing machine; but before Mr. Heilmann's patent was heard of we had succeeded in mastering all the difficulties connected with the invention. I, therefore, claim the combing-machine, as well as the spinning machine, as an English invention. I do not claim it for myself: I only claim that I am entitled to a fair share of credit for its success.'

There is little doubt that the adaptation of the combing-machine to the purposes of the worsted trade was mainly due to Mr. Lister. How much of the actual principle was invented by him it would be hard to say; but he not only threw out valuable ideas for perfecting it, but assisted others in every possible way to surmount the difficulties of the invention. In 1850, 1851, and 1852 many patents for improvements in woolcombing machinery were taken out by Mr. Lister and Mr. Donisthorpe, and in the last-named year they and the proprietors of Heilmann's machine got into litigation. The latter claimed that Heilmann had patented a woolcombing-machine in England in 1846, and the verdict of the court was against Messrs. Lister & Donisthorpe. Mr. Lister, however, maintained that the machine which he and Mr. Donisthorpe had introduced was superior to Mr. Heilmann's, and in order to substantiate this effectually, he bought Heilmann's patents for woolcombing for the sum of 30,000*l*. It may be stated also that six Lancashire firms paid a similar sum for the right of Heilmann's machine for the cotton processes, and that Messrs. Marshall of Leeds gave 20,000*l*. for its use in the flax trade, so that the ingenious Alsatian would reap in this country altogether a sum of 80,000*l*. for his invention. Mr.

Lister would naturally have relinquished the machine upon which he and Mr. Donisthorpe had spent so much time and money, had he been satisfied that Heilmann's machine was superior to it; but, instead of doing this, he simply set Heilmann's invention aside, and proceeded with increased energy to perfect his own. Ultimately Mr. Lister succeeded in producing a better machine than any that had previously been introduced to the trade, and obtained for it almost universal acceptance. As he approached the end of his task, and even after it was fully accomplished, he became hemmed in on all sides by rival inventors, and for a few years he was put to great cost in defending his position against one and another in the courts of law.

Machine woolcombing was now an unassailable fact. The hand-woolcombers saw their trade taken from them at one stroke. There were to be no more festivals in commemoration of Bishop Blaize, their patron saint. The poor operatives were powerless. In vain did they protest that the machine-combing was inferior to the hand-combing; the results pointed to the reverse of this. In vain did they hold meetings, and attempt to get up an anti-combing-machine agitation; the movement never had vitality enough in it to be worth while opposing. The hand-combers' handicraft had suffered total collapse, and was altogether past praying for. Thus it came about that in the course of a short year or two there was not a hand-comber left; all had been absorbed into other accessorial trades or had taken refuge in emigration.

Meanwhile Mr. Lister found himself at the head of a woolcombing business such as the world had never before dreamed of. He had successfully overcome

all opposition, and now established himself at Manningham as a sort of woolcomber king, possessing the command of one entire branch of the worsted manufacture. The works at Manningham were enlarged, and branch establishments were set up in Bradford, Halifax, Keighley, and other places in the West Riding; and still Mr. Lister was unable to keep pace with the demand. The ball of fortune was now at his feet, and he had nothing to do but keep it rolling. With all these concerns in full swing, Mr. Lister, as may be imagined, had his mind pretty completely occupied; still, his ideas expanded with his business, and in course of time he started woolcombing works on a large scale in France and Germany. The money he made during the few prosperous years which now ensued must have been enormous; but, for all that, he had his misfortunes, some of the managers at his branch-establishments failing to perform their part of the business compact satisfactorily, entailing great loss and inconvenience at times upon Mr. Lister. It was in his German speculations, and in one or two of his concerns near home, that Mr. Lister was led most astray; but he was possessed of indomitable energy, and no matter how often those in whom he put his trust failed him, he had always courage and perseverance enough left in himself to carry him over every difficulty. The establishments which he set up in France proved ultimately to be the most successful concerns of their kind in the world. Mr. Isaac Holden accepted the post of managing partner of these places, and worked them with great advantage; ultimately, in 1857, when Mr. Lister withdrew from them, taking them entirely

upon himself, and advancing them, in coöperation with his sons and partners, to the point of preëminence which they hold at the present time. For several years Mr. Lister continued at the head of these numerous establishments in England, France, and Germany, and reaped the advantage of his invention to the fullest extent, and made himself a high reputation in the world of commerce. All this time he had not suffered the combing-machine to rest at the point at which he had made it practicable. He still directed his attention towards its improvement, as did many others, and several important additions were made to it as time went on. One day the history of the woolcombing-machine will probably be written, and some attempt may then be made to apportion to each inventor his proper share of the merit of the invention. Nearly all the men who have helped the machine forward in any marked degree have been associated with Mr. Lister more or less; he has been, as it were, the chief controlling power. Lister, Donisthorpe, Noble, Platt and Collier, Heilmann, Hubner, Holden—these are the names which must always stand forth as representing amongst them the creation of the woolcombing-machine in its perfected form.

Mr. Lister, however, was not content to rest upon his laurels, and to remain satisfied with the ample fortune that his machine had brought him; he had the true inventor's instincts, and no sooner had he solved one mechanical difficulty than he longed for others to attack. Accident showed him a new world that was waiting to be conquered. Going one day into a London warehouse, he came upon a pile of rubbish which strongly attracted his attention.

He had never seen anything like it before. He inquired what it was, and was told that it was silk waste. 'What do you do with it?' he asked. 'Sell it for rubbish, that is all,' was the answer; 'it is impossible to do anything else with it.' Mr. Lister felt it, poked his nose into it, and pulled it about in a manner that astonished the London warehousemen. It was neither agreeable to the feel, the smell, nor the touch; but simply a mass of knotty, dirty, impure stuff, full of bits of stick and dead mulberry-leaves. In the end Mr. Lister made the offer of a halfpenny a pound for the 'rubbish,' and the sale was there and then concluded, the vendor being especially pleased to get rid of it on such advantageous terms.

When Mr. Lister got this 'rubbish' down to Manningham, he spent a good deal of time in analysing and dissecting it, and he came to the conclusion that there was something to be done with it. He now set himself to inquire into the exact position of the silk manufacture at home and abroad, making the fullest possible investigation. The result of this was that he found silk waste was treated all the world over as he had seen it treated in the London warehouse—as 'rubbish.' Mr. Lister now set his heart upon inventing machinery that should be able to manipulate this waste and imperfect product of the silkworm into fabrics that should vie in appearance with materials manufactured from the perfect cocoon. In this venture he was not beset by rivals, as he had been in the days when he strove to conquer the difficulties of the woolcombing-machine; he had taken a thing in hand now in which no one but himself felt the shadow of an interest, and he could work on without being haunted by the

fear of some one stepping in between him and success. He engaged a number of skilled workmen from foreign countries—men well acquainted with the manufacture of silk in all its branches—and although at first they viewed their master's experiments on silk waste with suspicion and distrust, they eventually came to think with him that there was 'something in it.' Mr. Lister now ceased to take the strong interest which he had hitherto done in woolcombing; he allowed the work to fall into other hands and to spread generally over the worsted district, he preserving to himself, however, the full rights and royalties of his patents. For the next ten years he applied himself heart and soul to the solving of the new problem which he had set before him, and early and late he worked at it, getting nearer and nearer to success every day. Few men would have held on as Mr. Lister did to this idea, in spite of commercial panic and weary and prolonged effort. In the crisis of 1857 loss upon loss was sustained by him; but he faced the brunt of the battle and carried himself gallantly through, not only bearing up against all this weight of misfortune, but against the enormously heavy expenditure which he was put to in regard to his silk inventions. There was much secret toil indulged in, in those days, at the Manningham Mills; the outside world knew little of what mighty schemes were there being matured. As before stated, Mr. Lister spent 360,000*l.* in perfecting machinery for the manufacture of silk waste before he ever made a single shilling by it.

By the year 1865 Mr. Lister had accomplished his task; he had subjected silk waste to so many intricate and delicate operations,

that he was able to manufacture from it velvet fabrics of great beauty. Many machines had to be invented—machines on a very gigantic scale—before the preparatory processes could be successfully mastered; and when this had been done, there was the velvet loom to bring into operation. This loom—which is the invention of Mr. Reixach, a Spaniard—gradually grew into a tangible fact, however, and it is considered to be a *magnum opus* as an invention. Mr. Lister bought this patent, and engaged the inventor's son to superintend its carrying out. It was some years after the loom got into Mr. Lister's hands, however, that it was made perfect. A power-loom for weaving velvet had been thought of before, it is true, Heilmann himself having in the early days of his inventive career brought out a loom for weaving two pieces of velvet simultaneously. It is curious to note how the lives of Heilmann and Lister have, in the matter of mechanical invention, run largely in the same groove: in the one case, however, the inventor had a wealth of original ideas, but was wanting in the practical application necessary to insure complete success; in the other case there was not only much real inventive power, but a superabundance of energy and practical knowledge.

From a very remote period the manufacture of silk had been carried on with more or less success, but until Mr. Lister came upon that heap of rubbish in the London warehouse no one had ever been able to do anything with silk waste. From the earliest ages silk had been recognised as the most beautiful material that the eye of man had seen; the poets were never tired of singing its praises; it had a foremost place in all the pageantry and

magnificence of the past; and its associations were those of rank, wealth, and beauty. The Romans of the second century esteemed a pound of silk 'not inferior in value to a pound of gold,' Gibbon tells us; and for centuries this exquisite material was only to be found as an adornment of the rich. Aristotle makes allusion to the silkworm, and Pliny records the fact that silk came from Assyria, and was worked by the Greek women. In those far-back days China and Persia had the monopoly of the raw material; but in the time of Justinian silkworms were brought to Constantinople by two Nestorian monks, and by this means the silk manufacture was introduced to Justinian's subjects. The manufacture subsequently spread into Sicily, Italy, Spain, and France, and James I. made the attempt to acclimatise the silkworm in England; but neither then nor later was it possible to establish it in our humid atmosphere, and to this day we have to rely solely on foreign countries for the supply of the raw product. So, up to the seventeenth century, England only knew silk as it was imported by the mercers who used to congregate in Cheapside. Lydgate's *London Lackpenny* says:

'Then to the Chepe I began me drawn,
Where much people I saw for to stand;
One offered me velvet, silk, and lawn;
Another he taketh me by the hand.'

Evidence is plentifully scattered through our early literature of the extreme favour in which silk was regarded as an article of costume. The much-enduring Grissell of the old ballad, when she married her brutal husband, exchanged her country russet for silk and velvet, and in the first stage of her subsequent debasement

'Her velvet gown
Most patiently she stripped off,
Her kirtle of silk with the same.'

The Lady Greensleeves of the Elizabethan ballad, too, has her

'Smock of silk both fair and white,
With gold embroidered gorgeously.'

So far back as 1286 silk mantles were worn 'by some noblemen's ladies at a ball at Kenilworth Castle;' and in 1534 the fabric had grown so much in favour, that the clergy began to array themselves in it. Whittington, the nursery hero, was a dealer in silks. Silk was held in the highest regard in England all through the Plantagenet and Tudor periods, and under the rule of the Stuarts something was done in the way of introducing the manufacture of this class of goods into this country. At last, when the Edict of Nantes forced a band of exiles, who had been engaged in the silk manufacture at home, to England, and they took up their abode in Spitalfields, the manufacture of silk was perfected and established there. In course of time the trade came to hold a not unimportant place amongst the national industries. Mechanical invention was brought to its aid, as to all other textile manufactures, and the trade was considered down to 1857 to have made all the advancement that could be expected of it.

It is not a little surprising, therefore, that an entirely new development of the silk trade should have been hit upon by one who had had no connection with that manufacture. And when Mr. Lister came to take this matter in hand, the difficulties in the way of success seemed to all but himself altogether insurmountable. The silk waste which he had set his heart upon converting into attractive fabrics, and which everybody had discarded as worthless since silk had been known, was the most uninviting aggregation of rubbish it was possible to conceive. It consisted of the waste

made from the manufacture of neat silk and pierced cocoons; and, as it came to Mr. Lister, looked like mutilated ropes, dirty flocks, or mucilaginous hemp, and was knotted and sticky and choked with sticks and leaves and dead silkworms. There were many who shook their heads discouragingly when they saw the heaps of dirty stuff which Mr. Lister had gathered round him; they thought the investment a bad one even at so low a price as a halfpenny a pound. It was not one machine simply that Mr. Lister had to invent before he could bring this rough material into subjection; he must invent a whole series of machines, if the thing had to be dealt with at all. So he began at the beginning, and invented machine after machine, and process after process, until the silk waste was in the end transformed into rich and beautiful fabrics. He had discovered a use and created a market for the much-despised rubbish, and from all the corners of the earth it now found its way to the Manningham Mills—from Persia, China, Japan, India, Italy, and elsewhere. Mr. Lister also made extensive arrangements for producing the raw material in its perfect form on an estate of his own; he accordingly purchased an estate of 1000 acres in Assam. It was found, however, that the difficulty of obtaining labour in that part of our Eastern dependency was so great that the idea of producing raw silk there had to be abandoned, and the estate was transformed into a tea plantation, and has been used as such ever since. More recently Mr. Lister has become possessed of extensive estates in the Punjab and Dehra Dun, where the Assamese worm has been introduced with considerable success, and where also the Italian and Japan-

ese worms are being largely cultivated. There are great filatures at one of these places, where it is intended to reel neat silk. The Assamese worm, it may be mentioned, does not feed upon the mulberry-tree, but upon the castor-oil plant, and produces five crops a year, the leaves of the plant remaining fresh all the year round.

It may be interesting at this point to attempt a brief description of the various processes which silk waste undergoes at Manningham Mills. Allusion has already been made to the condition in which the waste arrives at Mr. Lister's works, and the dirty unkempt appearance it has at that stage. To begin with, groups of boys are to be seen in a large room, sitting upon their haunches 'sorting' the waste, freeing it from the bulkier descriptions of impedimenta, and shaking it into more manageable form. From this department it is taken to the wash-house, where it is put into huge tanks, and washed and shaken with astonishing force and vigour. After this experience of soap and water, the fibre is transferred to a drying-room, in which place it lies in limp helplessness until the wet evaporates and it assumes an aspect of comparative cleanliness. It has now to make the acquaintance of Mr. Lister's machinery, being hurried away to the drums and preparers, where it is dragged and twisted and racked in a most terrible way. At each successive stage it becomes cleaner and softer and silkier; for the ponderous drums, belts, pulleys, and teeth it has to encounter are not accustomed to work without making a marked impression. Many of the machines are exceedingly formidable monsters, and grind their teeth and roar in the most terrific manner. The preliminary pro-

cesses are naturally very numerous; but at length the fibre reaches the combing-machines, and emerges from the latter a beautifully soft flossy filament. There is no doubt now as to its being convertible into lovely fabrics. It is altogether impossible to recognise in it the uncouth ill-looking stuff which was lying in heaps in the warehouse just as it came in. After the silk has left the combing-machines, it enters upon a more refined state of existence, passing successively through the hands of drawers, rovers, doublers, spinners, gassers, reelers, warpers, spoolers, and others, until it assumes the more recognisable shapes of warp and weft.

The weaving departments at the Manningham Mills are full of interest. One shed, covering an area of about 7000 yards—the Beamsley Shed—is entirely given up to the weaving of pieces. What an army of operatives one sees assembled here! They are all weaving velvet or plush, and the looms go through their operations with unerring exactitude, the shuttles flying to and fro with great speed. It is here that we see Mr. Lister's wonderful velvet-loom in active operation. Two pieces—one above the other—are woven in the same loom; and a mysterious knife glides across at each motion and effectually separates the twin pieces. There are looms of marvellously intricate formation engaged in weaving velvet ribbons; and others are employed in weaving the coarser kinds of silk into sacking, carpets, machine-cloths, &c. Everything that enters within the gates of Manningham Mills is utilised in some shape or other, a surprising variety of articles being produced in all from silk waste. The following may be enumerated by way of example: silk velvets,

velvets with a silk pile and a cotton back, silk carpets, imitation sealakin, plush, velvet ribbons, corded ribbons, sewing silks, Japanese silks, poplins, silk cleaning-cloths for machinery, bath-towels, floor-cloths, dish-cloths, and so forth. And all these from the once-despised silk waste! Such a revolution in one branch of manufacture was never accomplished before by any one. The consequence has been that silks have been greatly cheapened, and that a material which was regarded as worthless has come to have a value in the market, the price obtained for silk waste being now very greatly in excess of the original price paid by Mr. Lister.

It was no easy matter, at first, to get Mr. Lister's newly-invented silk machinery into proper working order. The 'hands' had to be taught over again. Each weaver cost the firm many pounds sterling before she had mastered the loom she had under her control. Meanwhile, Mr. Lister and a skilful staff of inventors were day by day engaged in perfecting and inventing machinery; and to this day this work of improvement goes on at Manningham Mills, each year seeing a marked advance upon the preceding one. Mr. Lister seems to be for ever on the point of bringing out another improved machine, of which the world will talk when it comes to have passed the Rubicon of the Patent Office.

The sewing-silk department at Manningham Mills is well worth inspecting. There is a very large quantity of the silk spun at these works converted into sewing-silk, and to watch the delicate threads coiling round the bobbins, under the guidance of a number of girls, is to be deeply interested. Thousands of bobbins of silk thread for the sewing-machine are here produced every week, black and

white being the prevailing colours, although there is a good sprinkling of silk threads of warmer and more attractive colours.

In connection with the works there are dye-houses, mechanics' shops, finishing-rooms, &c., all the processes connected with the manufacture of silk being begun and completed on the premises.

It will be well now to say something as to the appearance and extent of the Manningham Mills. The old works, in which Mr. Lister had wrought out so many of his problems, were destroyed by fire on the 25th of February 1871, the model of Mr. Lister's velvet-loom being burnt in the fire, although, fortunately, the drawings were saved. Damage to the extent of 70,000*l.* was done by this fire, and two lives were sacrificed. On the site of the old mills there then arose a new establishment, constructed on a scale of magnitude and with such attention to architectural effect as had never before been seen even in the West Riding of Yorkshire, thickly strewn as the locality was with factories of gigantic proportions. To the old site a large tract of land was added, the entire estate occupied by the new works being not less than eleven acres. The works occupy a commanding position on the hill-side between Manningham and Heaton, and form a conspicuous landmark for many miles round. They comprise sixteen acres of flooring, and the various buildings are of stone, and are bold and massive in appearance. The cornices of the more elevated blocks of buildings are extremely striking, and the projecting portions of the premises are very picturesque in design. There is a frontage of 350 yards to the Heaton-road, and the works extend from that point backward for a distance of 150 yards. The

great portion of the space thus covered is divided into sheds. There is the Beamsley Shed, before mentioned, where the velvet-weaving is carried on; there is the Green Shed, which is largely devoted to the weaving of fancy silks; there is the Lily Shed, which is given up to the operations of combing, doubling, and carding; there is the Blue Shed, where the velvets are finished; and, in addition, there are a number of smaller sheds, where dyers, mechanics, gassers, and what not, perform their several duties. At the south-western corner of this wilderness of sheds rise up the two principal buildings of the works—the mill and the warehouse, each building being six stories in height, and each covering an area of more than 2000 square yards. At the north end of the warehouse, and at the rear of the central shed, stands the chimney, which does duty for the entire establishment. This beacon of commerce is the sturdiest and handsomest chimney that the manufacturing districts of the North possess, and forms a prominent feature for miles round. It is a square structure, 83 yards in height, and absorbed 7000 tons of material in its erection. The tower of St. Mark at Venice would appear to have suggested the idea of the shaft; but the immense double cornice, which gives the crowning solidity to the chimney, shows a boldness of design that is much more imposing than the tapering belfry which surmounts the campanile of the Adriatic. All the buildings are fireproof. In every part of the interior the same massiveness of character prevails as in the external portions. A total horsepower of over 3000 is represented by the steam-engines used to run this stupendous concern, and when

the works are in full operation employment is afforded for about 4000 persons. The fact that one man has been able to establish so vast a business as this, and to adapt it solely to the carrying on of a branch of industry of which he may be really said to be the inventor, is something to marvel at even in an age which is full of great industrial achievements. At the same time that Mr. Lister built the new mills, he planned out a large estate on the western side of the works, and there erected several hundred cottages, which have since been occupied for the most part by people employed by him.

Mr. Lister's latest success in manufactures has been the production of plush goods, of which the world of fashion has recently become so deeply enamoured. During the last two years many thousand pieces of plush, ranging in colour through all the hues of the rainbow, have been made at the Manningham Mills. Indeed, the principal portion of the supply of this class of goods in England has been despatched from Mr. Lister's establishment, although both in Yorkshire and Lancashire several manufacturers have lately entered into rivalry to some extent with Mr. Lister in this branch of industry.

Mr. Lister inherited the family estate at Manningham in 1853, and resided at Manningham Hall, the ancestral mansion, down to the year 1870. There was a park of from fifty to sixty acres attached to the mansion; and in the days when Bradford had no public park, Mr. Lister used to throw his grounds open to the people every Whitsuntide for the celebration of holiday festivities, a small charge of admission being made for the purpose of raising a fund in aid of the charitable institutions of

the town. In this way a considerable annual sum was raised, and the Manningham Park Whitsuntide galas came to be regarded as the chief outdoor attraction of the year, as many as 100,000 people assembling there at one time. When the town became possessed of a park of its own, however—Peel Park—the scene of these yearly rejoicings was transferred from Mr. Lister's grounds to the new pleasure resort, and it seemed as if the park at Manningham was lost to the public for ever. But this was not to be. When Mr. Lister removed from Manningham Hall to Farfield Hall, near Addingham, the ancient residence of the Cunliffe family, he conceived the generous idea of putting it in the power of the town to become possessed of the park on very easy terms. His original idea had been to sell the park, which would have made a charming estate for villa residences, being well timbered and of very picturesque configuration; and with that view he had the property valued, when it was estimated to be worth 103,000*l*. When he came to the determination, however, to offer the park and mansion to the public, he consented to accept 40,000*l*. from the corporation, and this liberal proposal was acceded to; and on the 28th of October 1870, the property was formally transferred, to be held for the use of the public; since which time it has been greatly improved by the laying-out of new roads, the construction of lakes, waterfalls, &c., and is now one of the most popular places of resort in the neighbourhood. In honour of Mr. Lister the park was officially christened Lister Park; and it was in this place that Mr. Lister's statue was appropriately erected, being unveiled on the 15th of May 1875.

As a public man, Mr. Lister cannot be said to have filled a very conspicuous place. All the avenues of public life were open to him when he commenced his career. A man possessed of such family influence as he had, and having no urgent obligation to engage in money-making pursuits, might have earned a public position without much difficulty. But, from first to last, Mr. Lister has been a man of business; his inventions and his manufactures have occupied so large a share of his attention, that he has had little opportunity left for other work. Notwithstanding this, he has been a good and useful citizen, and has evinced a lively interest in several prominent matters. On the formation of a Volunteer corps in Bradford, he was appointed lieutenant-colonel, and held the position for several years. He has been long connected with the Bradford Chamber of Commerce, and that body has often been greatly indebted to him for the

lucid way in which he has laid down the position of things in regard to the working of the Patent Laws, in which, as may be supposed, he is exceedingly well versed. During the last year or two, Mr. Lister has concerned himself considerably with the questions of Free-trade and Reciprocity, having strongly advocated, in public meeting and otherwise, a partial return to the old system of Protection. At the last General Election he was selected, along with Mr. F. S. Powell, to contest the North Division of the West Riding, in the Conservative interest, against the old members, Lord F. Cavendish and Sir Matthew Wilson, but was unsuccessful.

It is as an inventor and promoter of English manufactures that Mr. Lister will be remembered, and the work that he has done in those directions will always preserve his name prominent amongst the industrial annals of the nineteenth century.

CONCERNING PARLOURS.

THE word 'parlour' is a remnant of a bygone state of things. The days are gone past when Sir Charles Grandison made his stately bows in the cedar parlour. 'There are no parlours nowadays, my dear,' said an old lady, whom we may call Mrs. Partington, 'except, I believe, in the public-houses.' We have dining-rooms, drawing-rooms, studios, libraries, smoking-rooms; but the parlour in the ordinary British mansion has almost become a thing of the past. It remains, in a highly-fossilised condition, as a venerable institution prized by the lower middle class. 'Will you walk into my parlour?' said the spider to the fly; and I always recognise the wretched feelings of that suicidal fly when I am invited into what people call a parlour. Very probably it is only used on state occasions. The family may burrow in some subterranean apartment in the basement. We perceive by a hundred signs that such a parlour is not a living room, but a dead room. It is full of stiffness and angularities, hard chairs and still harder sofas. The region in which the parlour retains any vitality is the agricultural region. In multitudes of farmhouses, and in some vicarages, this kind of apartment is still found. But the British farmer follows hard on the tracks of the squire, and gives up the humbler for the more ambitious nomenclature. It is the better class of labourer and the thriving artisan who are now aiming at the possession of parlours. Among them the parlour is really a happy and an educating influence. So pre-

valent have been peace and plenty of recent years, that in the suburbs of great towns you may pass whole rows of tenements in which you may distinguish pleasant parlours, with flowering plants filling the windows and the sound of pianos clashing all down the row.

Still, in special cases, the name of parlour yet survives, and of these I would say a few words. The parlour or parloir (Lat. *parabolaris*; Fr. *paroler*, *parler*), as the name indicates, is a place wherein to converse. The waiting-room of a club is essentially a parlour; in a less formal, but more real, sense so is the smoking-room. The old lady was perfectly correct in her allusion—which, however, was hardly to be expected of her—to public-houses. It would have been more decent if she had talked about taverns. And what glorious talk there has been in tavern-parlours before now! We think of Ben Jonson at the Mermaid, and Sam Johnson at the Turk's Head. There are still a few wits and scholars who haunt the sanded parlours of hostels about Fleet-street:

'When all his warm heart, sherris-warmed,
Flashed forth in random speeches.'

Such men have felt and said that there is no throne like the easy-chair of a tavern-parlour. Perhaps there are other attractions besides wit and liquor for a tavern-parlour. I know a great firm that advertises for pretty barmaids, and always sends them home at nights in a special conveyance, to be intrusted to the charge of a most respectable matron. I know men who are

members of good clubs, and who yet prefer to leave their higher luxury and comfort to enjoy the greater freedom and raciness of the parlour. I know of one occasion when a dozen men left a party given by a Cabinet Minister to go off to a tavern. In all country towns a parlour of this sort is the principal, or only, club in the place. Most business and professional people find it worth their while to look in for half an hour in the evenings. It is the conclave of a tavern-parlour which is the most powerful influence of a general election.

But let me enter another parlour, respecting whose respectability there can be no manner of doubt or hesitation. Let it be the parlour of a bank. We have all heard, doubtless with appropriate awe, of the parlour of the Bank of England. But nearly every bank has its parlour, where partners and managers sit in ease and state, giving nods where assent insures solvency, or shakes of the head, compared with which Lord Bursleigh's shake was simply fatuous. That fellow is a lucky one who with cafeless ease can pass beyond the counter and penetrate, in an easy familiar manner, into the very arcana. Here, in the bank-parlour, the City merchants walk in and get their seventy or eighty thousand pounds' worth of bills discounted in the course of a few minutes. But although your balance may be utterly below contempt, if you are a friend of the family, or a man of aristocratic or moneyed connection, you will get a hearty shake of the hand in the bank-parlour. Thackeray, in his *Newcomes*, speaks of the talks, of the interviews, that went on in the bank-parlour of that highly-respectable firm of which Sir Barnes Newcome was the head. Into the bank-parlours go the clerks, to

be bewigged by the heads of the firm if they are unpunctual or have manifested an undue desire for an increase of salary. Some years ago there was a striking picture at the Royal Academy of a clerk summoned into a bank-parlour to give account of forgery or of defalcations. The pale ashen features of the miserable culprit contrast strongly with the severe austere appearance of the justly incensed bankers. The situation is melodramatic enough, but the facts are very real, very possible. I am acquainted with a striking story of such a case. A clerk had defrauded a banking firm of a thousand pounds. The case was as clear as daylight against him. The facts and figures proved it. The man confessed it. The detective was waiting in the next room to take him into custody. There were extenuating circumstances. The case was one of great want and great temptation. Unfortunately want and temptation lie at the root of all such cases. At the very last moment, when the culprit was reduced to the lowest abyss of despair, the principal partner of the bank made up his mind not to prosecute. A process of acute reasoning led him to this resolution. In the first place, a criminal prosecution would not be the least help towards getting him back his money. It would, in fact, annihilate any small chance of getting the least return. Moreover, this enlightened banker argued: 'If I show the public that I am unable to take care of my own money, they will perhaps think that I am unable to take care of theirs. In these ticklish times it is not wise to take the slightest step that will impugn the credit of banks.' And so the unhappy man escaped scot-free from the bank-parlour. He went away, and I trust he sinned

no more. Considering the multitudes of clerks, such interviews in bank-parlours are, indeed, very rare. How different are some Paris bank-parlours compared with those in London! In Paris the inevitable dinginess of business is relieved by garden views of flowers and fountains.

There is a kind of parlour to which I have occasional access, and which I enjoy accordingly. This is a publishers' parlour. It is a kind of reading-room of a very unique sort. There is as much conversation as reading, frequently a good deal more. The publishers are catholic-minded men. Lying about the parlour you see all the new books—not only their own publications, but also those of the brotherhood generally. Here you may see early copies of new books, smelling so deliciously of the printing-press, which I think is the best scent of all, before they have got into the binder's hands, before they have even been sent out to the reviewers. You may perhaps see a printed proof of one of the Laureate's works, which often have been circulated for months among friendly critics before the time of publishing. You may see rare and costly books, such as never get into general circulation, and which are *caviare* to the vulgar. If there should be any literary news stirring, you may hear the news. If there is any literary lion roaring, you may perhaps hear him roar. The publishers' parlour is something like the parlour of the old coffee-houses of Wills and Button. A publishers' house has always its anecdotes, treasures, and traditions. Sometimes we outsiders, under propitious circumstances, are enabled to make the acquaintance in the flesh of author, critic, or editor, who had hitherto been to us *vox et præterea nihil*.

There is yet another kind of parlour,—the parlour of the monastery or the convent. Readers who are familiar with the history of Port Royal will remember how the youthful Abbess received her parents in the parlour, when she had resolved to make the rule of her abbey a reality, and not make it a mere source of deriving income and of profuse expenditure. These convent-parlours have witnessed many sorrowful scenes, 'the everlasting farewells, the everlasting farewells' of which De Quincey speaks. Henceforth all the sweet charities of life are well-nigh abandoned. There must be no maiden visions of the married lover and of babies on the knee. All intercourse with the outer world is henceforth limited to the *parloir*. Ever and again the parlour is filled with the living loving voices of the outer world. Does the recluse ever go back in fancy to brood over the story of life, and to wonder whether its plan has been well contrived or has been arranged amiss?

I said that the parlour was an old-fashioned institution. Let me go back to old-fashioned days, when it was a familiar institution to me. It was such a parlour as Longfellow would like to describe, which Mrs. Poyser might have inhabited. The diamond-paned casement-window is opened, and through it comes the murmur of those sounds of which Tennyson speaks:

'Myriads of rivulets hurrying through the
lawn,
The moan of doves in immemorial elms,
And murmurs of innumerable bees.'

By the way, as a bit of Tennysonian criticism, the first of these three lovely lines is absolute nonsense. Who ever heard of ten thousand rivulets hurrying through a lawn or any number of lawns? The place would be immediately

reduced to a swamp or a duck-pond with a single dozen of them. I simply wish to indicate the parlour of an old manor-house, with a garden before the front window, and an orchard by the side ones. There was the *escritoire*, the immemorial *escritoire*, in which the old gentleman used to keep his books and his moneys, holding out thereby immense provocation to people of burglarious minds. So very old were the decorative parts of the room—old portraits, old books, old articles of *virtù*, the old piano, the old, old songs, ballads which would be despised by those who know classical music, but whose simple melodies and simple words then went to our young hearts. Then the rows of books : the old Minerva Press novels, which no one reads now ; the first editions of the eighteenth-century poets, which had been brought as fine novelties into the fine parlours. There was a tall closet in the parlour, where unheard-of treasures, marvellous to the childish imagination beyond bank-notes and cheques, were stored away : guava jellies, home-made wines, figured chests of tea, that had come all the way from China, old silver flagons, tall drinking-cups. There was the dear old lady who presided, tall and prim, with a complexion clear and delicate as a girl's. I sometimes wonder where the next generation of grand old ladies is to come from. It was in the parlour that we used to have our select and polite evening parties 'to tea.' The tea came off at the primeval hour of five o'clock. It was a repast fearfully and marvellously made. Every possible home-made delicacy that could exhibit our resources, our ingenuity, and our tastes was exhibited. The pestilential doctrine of 'tea and turn out' was not then invented. At nine o'clock

the old oaken table ought, to speak metaphorically, to have groaned under the good things. The discreet elders in the interim had retired to the kitchen to smoke their churchwardens. Then there were any number of forfeits involving osculation to the π^{th} . The treat in the old parlour was the happiest reminiscence of the past, and most blissful anticipation of the future.

There is yet another parlour, the commonest of all of which one has to speak. It is the most decided contrast which can be conceived to the parlours of which I have just spoken. This is the parlour of the London lodging-house. In the economy of such a lodging-house there are several stages and gradations to be noted. The swell of the lodging-house is the man who has the drawing-rooms. His bedroom is the second-floor front. The man who has the parlour has the second-floor back. He, too, in the estimation of the landlady, is a swell, but of subordinate character to the drawing-room swell. The more restricted lodging-house would have the parlour lodger's bedroom on the ground-floor, and only folding-doors would divide the drawing-room from its bedroom. It is rather curious to find oneself described, briefly and personally, as a parlour. The 'parlour' has forgotten to take his latchkey, or the 'parlour' has ordered a sole for breakfast. That is all you stand for in the estimation of the landlady. The parlour constitutes the final cause for which you were destined. The 'parlour' is your *raison d'être*. You are for the parlour, and the parlour for you, as glove and hand go together. When once you give up the parlour you drop into the wide sea of humanity, and are distinguishable no more.

I knew a man who took a parlour

for a number of years. He was a man of a good deal of taste, and in the course of a few years turned everything that the landlady had out of the doors and windows. The rickety armchair, with the fugitive castor, went; the other chairs of infirm constitution, very weak in back and legs, were stacked like so much old timber, as, indeed, they were; the greasy old carpet, concerning which a legend prevailed that it had once been an imitation Brussels, suddenly, its constitution being utterly destroyed, gave way in twenty places at once, and was swept out of the room like so much waste-paper by the housemaid. The round table also disappeared. The mystic report prevailed in the neighbourhood that some spirit-rappers had operated on the table, which gave a convulsive dance about the room, and then disappeared in the direction of the attics. I must, however, say that my friend gives a very different version of the ultimate destiny of the table. He has now filled his parlour with good Chippendale furniture, and says that not a single rag or stick belonging to the old woman is to be found in it. But she still makes her weekly appearance, presenting a bill for which the first item is twenty-five shillings for furnished lodgings, accompanied by a long train of extras. Let me only express the hope, my friends, that if I am addressing any one of my fellow-creatures who is a lodger, he will cultivate the conscientious habits which befit his calling: that if he is the last man he will put up the door-chain; that he will not leave any matches on the floor or staircase; that he will confine

the use of the latchkey within reasonable limits; that he will avoid giving unnecessary trouble in his early and late demands; and that he will deal with the overworked servants liberally when he goes away for his holiday, or in company with some sweet creature relinquishes the comforts of bachelorism for a home of his own.

Many are the traditions and recollections that gather round various of the London parlours. It has been suggested that some memorial slab or stone should be placed in houses where celebrated people have lived, and in some cases this has actually been done. This might be done on quite a large scale in the parlours of London lodging-houses. One might speak of the actors and artists, the authors and journalists, the men of wit and fashion and business, who have been well content with the unambitious parlour, having, however, in so many cases the run of clubland and a general entry into society. One case I especially remember. It was that of a young scion of the aristocracy, who, having only slender means from home, first made himself a free-lance in literature, and afterwards a power in politics. Rigorously and wisely economical, he stuck to the parlour of a London lodging-house until his name had become bruited over the world. He is now the favourite guest of palaces, and has palaces of his own. Lastly, Asmodeus, when he took off the roofs and peeped into the houses, might have seen a great deal of the curious and comic phases of life beneath the ceilings of metropolitan parlours.

AMONG THE HEATHER.

A Highland Story.

BY A. C. HERTFORD.

CHAPTER XV.

'A good old English gentleman, one of
the olden time.' *Ballad.*
'No love like mother-love ever has shone.'

SHRIEK! went the engine, and the train glided slowly out of the station; one last good-bye, one wave of the hand, and Fanny was lost to view. Norah had begun the long journey home. Ah, how she had been longing for and looking forward to this! and now that it had come, what would she not give that the necessity for it had never arisen! So much had been crowded into the last few hours that thinking had been out of the question; now, as the train rushed on between high mountains, beside streams and rocks, through lovely scenery of every description, she paid no heed to it, but lay back in her corner, with closed eyes, and thoughts far away, standing in imagination beside the bed on which the much-loved little sister lay, and by degrees working herself into a fever of nervous excitement as she thought that this day must pass, and the long night also, ere home could be reached. And O, what might not have happened before then! Trying to change this current of anxious thought, she next lived over again, in imagination, her visit, now among the things of the past, at Robin Lodge. But here another trouble met her. The greater sorrow had for a time made her forget the lesser; but there it

still was, ready to assert itself whenever it got a chance, and if the house seemed dark and dreary to Geoffrey after Norah's departure, I doubt if she felt that dusty railway carriage any brighter a place. Poor girl! her view of life just now was sad enough to please even Miss Duff; but I do not think her present trouble would have been any easier to bear had she failed to take enjoyment out of the happy days which had been sent before the sorrowful. She leant back and tried to think of nothing at all; which, by the way, is one of the most fruitless of attempts. A gruff voice roused her presently, proceeding from an old gentleman at the opposite end of the carriage, its only other occupant.

'I perceive, ma'am, that you do not admire mountain scenery. Now I love it.'

'O yes, I do indeed,' she answered, smiling at his eccentric manner.

'Then why don't you look out? When I was your age I enjoyed nothing better than a journey through parts like these; it was not the railway then, though—nothing so luxurious—but travelling often through mist and rain, on the top of a crowded coach. I wouldn't go to sleep if I were you. You don't know how much you are losing.'

'I was not sleeping, only thinking.'

'Thinking with your eyes shut,

eh! That means only a step across the boundary to dreamland. Young ladies like you have no business to think. Now I wonder what the thoughts were about? I'd lay a good round wager they concerned balls and pretty frocks.'

Norah smiled sadly.

'No, I am afraid my thoughts were very sorrowful ones. I am going home, after a visit to friends, to nurse a little sick sister; and I was thinking of her when you spoke.'

The old gentleman's manner changed instantly.

'Poor child! poor child! don't cry,' he said hurriedly, as the tears rose unbidden to her eyes. 'You know it won't do any good. What's the matter with the little lady?'

'I don't know; I only got a telegram.'

'Hang telegrams!' snarled her companion savagely. 'They are apiece with all these confounded new inventions! Their chief end seems to be frightening honest folk out of their wits with their abruptness! I am a Tory, ma'am; my father was one before me, and my grandfather before him! I like plain old-fashioned customs; but they are all fading fast away one after the other, and I am constantly saying to myself, "My boy, it's time you faded away too; there are new heads rising up to fit the new shoulders." Mary might misse me, though. Ah, well!'

The old man sat lost in thought for a minute or two, gently tapping the floor with his large silver-headed umbrella; and Norah as silently watched him, wondering who Mary was. Presently he roused himself.

'But I have not said what I meant to, ma'am. Depend upon it, you will find your little sister not half as bad as the nasty little piece of pink paper led you to expect. Don't fret, ma'am.'

Norah wished she could honestly believe as he told her; but she was comforted nevertheless by the rough sympathy, and the funny manner kept her thoughts from herself and her troubles.

'Now, ma'am,' continued her companion, 'observe what the march of knowledge does, and you will wonder how any one can wish for improvements. Here we are in this train, for instance; and I don't wish to frighten you, but whenever I set foot in a railway carriage, I say to myself, "Here you are, Dick Lewis, safe and sound at present, though you are growing old; but the chances are that some one will have the unpleasant duty forced upon him of picking you out piecemeal somewhere between this and your journey's end." You know, ma'am, in the old coaching-days we never had accidents of any consequence—at least, they were a rarity. Then in these railway journeys you may sit for the best part of a day beside some of your fellow-creatures, your brothers and sisters, ma'am; and ten chances to one you won't address two words to them throughout the entire journey; or if you summon up courage to break the ice, and open a conversation, you get your head almost frozen off by the cold answer. Now on the coach one often made friends for life with the man who sat next you.'

'It must have been very unpleasant if he proved disagreeable,' remarked Norah, amused in spite of herself.

'People were pleasanter in those days, ma'am; more frank and hearty; stood less on their dignity. Just look at servants nowadays too! Why, when I was a boy, and that's an old story now, my dear, they were good, honest, hard-working men and women; could read and write, and keep a

civil tongue in their heads; once settled in a good family, they were settled there for life, so long as they behaved themselves, at least. Now if you go into any parish school you will find the little monkeys learning more than you probably know yourself; and pray what good does it do, ma'am? What good! that is the question. You certainly get a maid-servant who can play the piano, read French, and do fancy-work; and a man-servant who knows Latin, oils his hair with your pomatum, draws, and writes poetry to his lady-love. But show me the servant who will keep the house clean and look after his master's interests even when his back is turned, and you will show me a rarity; a rarity, ma'am, and no mistake!

Norah's eccentric new friend ran on in the same strain, not requiring many answers, only an assent now and then, for to dissent from him would have been worse than useless, till at last, having tired himself out, he dropped peacefully asleep and slumbered on, only waking as the train puffed into Edinburgh station. There was some little time before the night train to London would start, and Norah had promised that she would employ the interval in at least attempting to eat something; for the lunch she had taken before starting would hardly have satisfied a hungry little bird. The old gentleman was wide enough awake now, and looked after Norah and her luggage in truly fatherly style. He seemed to have taken her under his special protection, and being both bound for London, and both travelling by the same train, proposed that they should make the journey together, and keep each other company. His gruff manner had entirely disappeared

—at least, so it seemed to Norah—and from his keen gray eyes there only shone forth the warmth of his honest old heart. She gladly accepted his offered escort, feeling amused by the friendship which had so suddenly sprung up between them. They enjoyed a comfortable little tea together; for, spite of anxiety, Norah's long fast made her glad of some food. When everything was ready, and they were once more about to start, her companion tipped the guard, asking if the young lady and he could be allowed a compartment to themselves; which favour that gentleman granted, adding, 'And if your young lady would care for a foot-warmer, sir, I'll bring one in a minute; the nights grow chilly now, sir.'

The old gentleman answered gravely, but chuckled as the guard departed. Yet Norah fancied she noticed just the slightest shade of sadness pass over the fine old face, and that there was a touch of regret in the kind voice as he said, 'That man took you for my daughter, my dear, though, by the way, you might better be my granddaughter. Ah, well, if I had pleased God ever to give me a little girl like you, I think I should have loved her very much. But I must content myself with playing father to other people's children now; that is next best to the real thing; and I must not grumble because of one blessing withheld when so many have been showered down upon my underserving old head. Now, my dear, you must let an old man have his way! I shall make you up a comfortable bed in this corner, and as soon as we start you must go to sleep like a good child, or your heavy eyes will be enough to frighten your little sister when she sees you to-morrow.'

Norah looked up gratefully as

he covered her carefully with her wraps and settled her cushions more comfortably. After he had performed these little services, he composed himself in the opposite corner, and wishing her 'Good-night, my dear; I am going to sleep, and you must follow my good example,' closed his eyes, and in less than five minutes was utterly unconscious of all things.

'Certainly,' thought Norah, 'his terror of accidents does not seem much to destroy his rest.' Soon, tired both in mind and body, she too fell asleep, and had a strange dream.

Once more she was in the Highlands, and Madge, who was very ill, was there too. Not in her little bed, though, but out among the heather on the bleak hillside, where the cruel rain smote down hard and fast, and there was no shelter from the biting stinging wind, and none was near to help save Norah. And she stood up, and strained her eyes, and called for aid; but the wind carried her voice away, and at last, when she opened her mouth to cry, no sound would come. And the rain came down, and the wind blew. In a little time a figure approached, and as it came nearer she saw that it was Percival. And she called out aloud, 'O, help me! Carry home my sister, for she is very ill!' And Percival stooped to raise the child, and, as he did so, the storm became more violent and beat against him, till his arms lost their strength and dropped their burden to the ground. And he tried once again, but it was of no avail. Then he cried, 'Help me, Norah! Let us work together!' And Norah stooped and tried, but each seemed to hinder the other; they could not raise the child. Then Percival gave up in despair, and walked sadly away. And the rain came down, and the wind

blew. After a little time Norah saw another figure come slowly over the mountain-side, and as it came nearer she saw that it was Geoffrey. And she raised her voice, and cried aloud, 'O, help me! Carry home my sister, for she is very ill!' And Geoffrey came quickly, and he said, 'Help me, Norah! Let us work together!' and she answered gladly, 'Yes, Geoffrey, I will!' And as they stooped together, they raised the little child with ease; she seemed no longer heavy, the weight of the burden had been halved, each helped the other in their work. And the rain ceased to fall, and the wind to blow, and through a rift in the cloud the glorious sun burst forth. Then Geoffrey looked up and smiled, and said, 'Norah, why were you so faithless? 'Twas only the sun behind the cloud. Did you not know I would come to you at last? Look up, my child, my love; ever keep looking up!' And Norah *did* look up; and the sun shone forth so brightly that she awoke.

It was only the light of the railway-lamp shining in her eyes, after all. There was no Geoffrey, no Madge, no sun behind the cloud; the train was every moment carrying her farther and farther away from the dear Highland hills, and all seemed dark and sad to poor little Norah Grant. Mr. Richard Lewis slumbered peacefully on. Norah, feeling no longer sleepy, sat up, and tried to make out through the smoky carriage-windows some of the dim objects in the darkness outside. She smiled as she thought of her strange dream; a sad little smile it was, though. Would it ever come true? Would Geoffrey and she ever be allowed to share life's many burdens between them? On the whole the dream rather comforted her; might it not have

been sent as a sign to hope on, hope ever! Do not be afraid lest I should be about to weary you with a long account of Norah's thoughts and feelings during this railway journey; suffice it to say that, contrary to the expectations of good old Mr. Lewis, no accident happened, no broken bones had to be picked out of the carriage half-way, but about seven next morning the Flying Scotchman triumphantly entered King's Cross Station, and Norah and her new friend alighted. How gray and grubby every one does look, to be sure, after a long night's journey! And yet how people vary in this respect! Some make a point of getting untidy as soon as they enter a railway-carriage; it is evidently an important part of the journey, in their eyes. Necktie pulled to one side, hat askew, gloves thrown off, and consequently hands dirty. Others, on the contrary, look almost as trim and neat at the end of the journey as at the beginning; a trifle dusty, perhaps, but that they cannot help. Norah belonged to the latter class of travellers; but she looked pale and anxious, and no wonder, poor child; the last few hours had been very trying.

'Now, my dear,' remarked her friend, 'any one sent to fetch you, eh?'

'There is sure to be, I think—yes, there is Neville; I thought mother would send her. Poor woman, she always gets short-sighted at a railway-station;' and Norah hurried off, eager to find the maid and hear tidings of her sister.

Mr. Lewis meanwhile departed to look after their luggage. Returning a few minutes later with Neville, Norah found him seated triumphantly on his large portmanteau, making a footstool of his small one, his voice heard loud

above the din calling for 'a large black trunk with N. G. in red letters, a little black bonnet-box with N. G. in red letters; who will be good enough to bring me those articles with N. G. marked in red letters?'

Good old man, if only he had put on his spectacles he would have seen that those same red-lettered trunks had, in due order, been taken from the van, and were now quietly lying on one side, waiting to be claimed.

Norah hurried up.

'O Mr. Lewis, Neville says my sister is no worse, perhaps a shade better, this morning. I am so thankful!'

'My dear, I congratulate you. I dare not rise from my seat, or there is no knowing what would become of this property of mine; but I congratulate you with my whole heart. I told you how it would be yesterday, only I could see you did not believe the old man. I have had some experience, my dear, and have invariably found those telegrams to be mere sensational disturbances, terrifying one out of one's five senses all for nothing. Now, my dear, how are you going to get home?'

'Neville has found my trunks, I see, and got a cab; so I am ready to start at once, and must wish you good-bye. Thank you so much for all your kind care of me; mother will feel so grateful when she knows; and,' added Norah, somewhat shyly, 'if ever you are near Addison-gardens, and will come to see us, we shall be so happy.'

'I am going very much in that direction at present, my dear; for I mean to part from you only at your own door. Ask your nurse to call for my brougham—Mr. Lewis's brougham; it has a fat piebald horse; and when she has found it you and I will start

for Addison-gardens together. Mistress Neville may ride in the cab and guard your luggage. I never quite trust these London cabmen. You won't mind me seeing you safely home, my dear? You will let an old man please himself?

He was still seated on his property, and Norah looked down on him with grateful eyes.

'Thank you so much,' she said. 'I can't think what makes every one so kind.'

'Perhaps the little girls, who are so nice, have something to do with it, my dear! You need not thank me; I live quite close myself, my sister Mary and I; it is all on my way.'

Norah afterwards learnt that the abode of Mr. Richard Lewis and his sister was a small house not far from Cornwall-gardens. Some persons might have considered his proposed route home a roundabout one. The brougham with the fat piebald horse was soon found, and they started. It is a long drive at the best, that from King's Cross to Kensington, a weary drive, particularly after a long night's journey; but it came to an end at last. There stood the dear familiar house; but, O, how her heart sank as the carriage drove silently up, for there was straw laid down! She mutely pointed to it, with such an anxious look in her eyes that Mr. Lewis wondered if he could be going to have a cold, he felt such a strange choky feeling in his throat. But he answered cheerfully her unspoken question:

'Straw, my dear! And a very sensible arrangement; it is best to have entire quiet, however alight the illness. Why, I have known people lay it down for a bad headache' (the kind old fellow must have had rather hypochondriac friends).

The door was reached. With

one grateful hasty good-bye, Norah jumped out. The old gentleman pulled the check-string, ordered his coachman to drive off, and soon the brougham and the piebald horse had quitted Addison-road.

Only a kind old Christian, dropping a seed of kindness where he could! Only a true-hearted old-fashioned gentleman! He had but lightened a sad journey to one of his fellow-travellers in life, but helped to comfort one lonely little heart. Not great deeds these in the eyes of men, if ever they hear about them at all. A pretty little maiden lady, who is waiting just now in a small house near Cornwall-gardens, and wondering what keeps Dick so long, will, perhaps, be told the cause of his delay, and will gently answer, 'Quite right, dear Dick; it is all in the day's work.'

But I think, when men are judged by their works, there are many like Richard Lewis who will not be forgotten.

The door opened almost before Norah had had time to knock; another moment, and she was in her mother's arms. Mrs. Grant drew her gently into the drawing-room, and kissed and caressed her in a way which told how sorely she had been missed.

'O mother, tell me quickly, how is Madge? Neville tells me it is low fever; mother, why did you not send sooner?' and Norah looked up reproachfully.

'Darling, I telegraphed as soon as we knew there was the least cause for alarm. Madge had been ailing for some little time, but we hoped it was but the effect of London air after the seaside; it was only some few days ago we knew it was low fever; then the doctor trusted it would be a slight attack, and I did not wish

to shorten your visit unnecessarily. But the night before last her mind wandered, and she cried so constantly for you, Norah, that the doctor said I should send for you at once, it was the most likely thing to do her good.'

'Mother, you should have sent sooner; I was, O, so ready to come!'

Mrs. Grant thought she discovered a trace of home-sickness in the voice; but she took no notice of it, only smoothed her daughter's hair, and taking the little face between her hands, imprinted a loving kiss on it, as she said,

'Madge is no worse this morning, love; and after you have had some breakfast, if you think you can keep very quiet and composed, you may go to her. Be cheerful, for she gets tired and fretful at times, poor child.'

Mrs. Grant was a sweet delicate-looking woman, tall and fair. Her little daughter Madge resembled her more in face and figure than did Norah; but she had the latter's soft gray eyes and dark lashes, and something of her expression too when she smiled. A thorough lady and a thorough mother. Everything about the little house spoke of taste and refinement: from the tiny conservatory, filled with bright flowering plants, opening out of the drawing-room, down to the minutest details of the furniture, a lady's hand was visible throughout. Norah did not feel the least hungry; but with her mother seated near, coaxing her to eat, she tried, just to please her. She soon rose, and pushed away her plate.

'Mother, I cannot wait any longer; let me see Madge now.'

Mrs. Grant led the way upstairs, and opened softly the door of the sick-room; then stood back, and whispered,

'You had better go in alone. She knows you are come, and we must not excite her with too many people.'

A quick cry of pleasure from the bed as Norah came forward was the sweetest welcome she could have had; and as she bent down, and two hot little arms were clasped tight round her neck, while a weak little voice said, 'O Norah, you have really come at last! You can't think how I have wanted you!' she felt happier than she had done for some days past, and forgot for a time that other trouble which seemed no nearer a happier termination than before.

That same evening, leaving Madge, who had at last fallen asleep, to the tender care of the faithful old nurse, mother and daughter repaired down-stairs together. Mrs. Grant poked the drawing-room fire into a cheerful blaze, seated herself in a low chair beside it, and putting her arm round Norah's waist, drew her gently down till she knelt beside her.

'And how about your visit, dearie?' she asked. 'I have not heard a word of it yet.'

Norah curled herself up comfortably on the hearth-rug and leant her head back against her mother's knee ere she answered: it did not quite suit her feelings that this conversation should be carried on face to face; then she said,

'I enjoyed my visit, on the whole, very much, mother.'

'As much as last year's, Norah?'

'Well, perhaps not quite so much.'

'I thought not, dear. How was that?'

'I don't know exactly;' and Norah's eyes were steadily fixed on the fire.

Mrs. Grant made no remark on

the subject, though she rather suspected that her daughter could easily have found out the reason had she wished. She also felt sure there was some trouble pressing on her child just now, from the worried look in her eyes; but she had entire confidence in her, and did not press the matter further.

'Who were there besides yourself, dear?' she presently asked.

'O, a funny old aunt of Mr. Ross—such a queer specimen, mother!—an English girl, Miss Tennant; and Mr. Leicester, who was there last year, you know; and,' rather quickly after an instant's pause, 'a Mr. Lindsay.'

Mothers' ears are the quickest, and mothers' eyes the keenest; but any one would have been very blind not to have discovered that under those last words a story lay hid. Mrs. Grant had looked somewhat anxious at the mention of Percival's name; for she had had her fears in that quarter. They soon subsided, however; for though the gray eyes were still fixed on the fire, Norah's colour never changed, and the hand that lay in her mother's never moved. But when Geoffrey's name had been so hurriedly spoken the head had turned just a little further away and the hand had involuntarily trembled. That was all; but these simple actions told a good deal. As Norah had said to herself in the Highlands, when feeling lonely and homesick, 'Mother saw and sympathised.' Unspoken sympathy truly, but comforting nevertheless. Mrs. Grant remembered a time, long ago now, when she had experienced something of these feelings herself; and her heart felt heavy for her daughter's troubles. She asked no further confidence, but, stooping down, kissed her child's forehead,

and whispered low, 'God bless you, my dearest!'

It was growing late, and without another word mother and daughter rose and wished each other good-night. Norah had almost gained her own room, when, turning round, she threw her arms round Mrs. Grant's neck, hugged her close, and whispered, 'There never was a mother like you in the world; it is so sweet to be at home again!'

CHAPTER XVI.

'When pain and anguish wring the brow,
A ministering angel thou.' SCOTT.

DARK days followed; dark and days. Madge grew worse; the straw laid down in front of that house in Addison-gardens was many times renewed. Neighbours saw the doctor's carriage stop there oftener and remain longer; and they may also have noticed that, as he left the house, there was frequently a sorrowful pitying look on his kindly face. Good and noble men as doctors mostly are, how much they see of the sad side of life! a side often so utterly mournful that few can ever become callous to it, however familiar constant practice may make them with it. This doctor was an honest Christian, a true gentleman, and a great lover of all his little patients. He had many children of his own at home, who often boasted that never once could they remember him addressing one angry word to them, or making use of one hasty expression. He had been blessed with a sweet unselfish temper, which he carried with him to every sick-room he visited. Was it any wonder that he was universally loved and honoured? Madge looked forward to his visits with eager pleasure, and when, after a

little time, he began to come more frequently—twice, and at last three times, a day—she only felt how good it was of him to spend so much time and trouble on her. Ah, but after a little while she ceased to think at all, and Norah, the never-failing watcher beside her bed, heard only rambling words, snatches of conversation carried on with imaginary persons, low moans of restlessness and pain; often—and this was the hardest to bear—cries for herself, for Norah to come back; why did she stay so very long away? Then when she would come gently up to the bed and stoop over the sufferer, laying her cool hand on the hot brow, it would almost break her heart to see the blue eyes turned up without a trace of recognition in them, only a vacant weary gaze.

So the days went by, Madge growing daily weaker, till to the loving eyes that watched her she seemed only waiting to be carried to the land that is very far off. The Angel of Death was no stranger in the family—he had visited it many times before; they knew his stern face well, and dared not deceive themselves. But beside that little sick-bed mother and sister were not the only watchers. It seemed so hard to believe that another Form was also there, looking with loving pitying eyes on the sorrow He had Himself sent, which He was waiting to help them to bear, and which was to work together for their good, because they loved God. They did remember Him, though, and fervent agonised prayers went up from mother and sister that the Good Shepherd would leave them this lamb just a little longer, or, if this must not be, carry it safely away in His loving arms to the home where pain and sorrow, tears and sighing, never pass the door.

Many, many times was this prayer renewed; at last, as the beloved little child grew worse, when the good doctor, daily meeting the mother's anxious gaze and reading the unspoken question, 'How is she?' had each time to answer more sadly, 'No better,' they no longer hoped for an answer to the first part of their prayer, but only begged that the restless pain might be shortened, and that little Madge might soon be 'where the weary are at rest.'

So when their faith and trust had been sorely tried, when they had stood the test, when they were most ready to give up their darling that her sufferings might be shortened, she was restored to them. One evening, when the doctor paid his customary visit, and Norah asked him, 'Tell me, is there *any* hope?' he gave that answer which has so many times been sadly uttered, 'My dear, while there is life there is hope; her case lies in higher hands than ours; we must leave it there: man can do little more.' Then, instead of, as usual, softly leaving the house, saying he would return the first thing in the morning, he offered to remain and watch with them. A change must soon take place, and he might be wanted.

Just when all was at its darkest, when there seemed no ray of hope remaining, when they could only sit and watch for the end, the fever turned, Madge opened her eyes, and the doctor, hastily going to her, felt her skin, her pulse; and the kind voice, which had remained steady through the hours of terrible anxiety, now trembled, as he turned to the mother and said,

'She will do now. God has truly worked a miracle to save her.'

And when Mrs. Grant, hardly daring to believe that what he

said was true, came softly to the bedside and looked on the beloved little face, she no longer met a blank unconscious gaze, but Madge tried to hold out two weak arms, looked up lovingly, and, with a contented murmur of 'Mother' and 'Norah,' turned on her side and dropped into a peaceful slumber. It had indeed been darkest before the dawn; but light had come at last, and the sad night was now among the things of the past.

Gradually Madge began to mend; very, very slowly, for the long illness seemed hardly to have left her strength to recover. Little by little she grew stronger, till at last the doctor said he hoped she was out of the wood now, and they must take great care she did not return to it. The most wearisome part of the illness began now, when, tired out and restless, poor Madge grew at times fretful and impatient; when all things failed to amuse her; when she longed for a change from the sick-room she had been confined to so long. Now did Norah's love shine out true and strong. She never complained when impatient words were wrung from the usually patient little invalid, but would sit for hours reading to her, singing to her, telling her stories, concocting dainties to tempt the capricious appetite, feeling she could never do enough for the sister who had been so mercifully restored to her. And she was rewarded a hundred-fold; for the wan face would light up with pleasure when Norah entered the room, and the grateful, 'It feels so nice to have you here,' was the greatest recompense she could have had.

Now that the necessity for exertion had passed, Mrs. Grant's overtried strength gave in, and, though not dangerously ill, she

became so weak and nervous that the doctor forbade her entering the sick-room, except on rare occasions; so Norah had now two invalids on her hands. She did almost everything for Madge; and faithful old nurse hovered between the two rooms, doing all that was necessary for her mistress, but keeping careful watch over her cherished young charge.

Norah had not been without tender sympathy during these trying times. Kind friends had written loving letters from all parts, and many were the sad accounts she had had to send off during the last few weeks. Friends in London had been unfailing in their inquiries, and one day Norah had been astonished to see a brougham draw up at their door, with a piebald horse she remembered well, for it was the same that had brought her home from King's Cross Station three weeks ago. Three weeks! It seemed more like three years! There had alighted, not an old gentleman, but a neat little middle-aged lady, who sent up a card bearing the name of 'Miss Mary Lewis,' and Norah thought she had never seen a sweeter face than the owner of that card possessed. Such a calm, peaceful, childlike face, that Norah's heart had gone out to her visitor at once. Many times afterwards the same brougham stopped at the door and the same little figure descended, sometimes alone, sometimes accompanied by her brother; and once, when Madge was getting better, by a Skye terrier named 'Fanny,' who politely went up-stairs and paid the patient an afternoon call. Usually Miss Mary Lewis brought a small covered basket in her hand, from which some dainty was produced 'for your little sister upstairs, with my love,' sometimes jelly, temptingly clear and deli-

cate-looking; sometimes delicious fruit, or sweet flowers; till Madge learnt to look forward to her unknown friend's visit with pleasure, and longed for the time when she might see and thank her for herself.

Norah had had one or two long letters from Fanny, full of loving sympathy and kind messages. Some of these she had shown her mother, some she had not. In her last letter, Fanny mentioned Geoffrey's having quitted Robin Lodge and returned to London. 'Perhaps some day you may come across him,' continued the letter; 'his home in Porchester-terrace is not far from yours. I fancy he seemed to think our poor little windows let in less light after a certain young lady departed? Involuntarily, as she read this, Norah started, and Madge, who was lazily lying in bed, contentedly eating her breakfast, said,

'What is the matter, Norah? Did anything hurt you?'

'No, nothing, dear,' and Norah kept her face carefully away till the tell-tale colour had subsided; then, slipping the letter into her pocket, she came across to Madge, and began chatting to her in her usual bright way.

'Stoop down,' commanded the small invalid; and Norah obeying, she clasped both arms tight round her neck, hugged her close, and said, 'Then if nothing hurt you, why did you start like that? You mustn't do it again, or I shall think you are getting ill too; and, if you grow ill from nursing me, I think I shall die.'

Norah laughingly rallied her for her silly fancies, and the subject dropped. But when alone, some hours later, in her own room, she locked the door, and once more drawing the letter from her pocket, read a certain part of it carefully over again. Could she, dare she, believe what Fanny

wrote? Was there any chance of that strange dream coming true? Did Geoffrey really care whether she were absent or present? O, if what Fanny told her was not strictly true, it was cruel to have awakened fresh hopes in her breast! Lately, Norah's thoughts had been so much occupied with other things that she had had no time to ponder on her own private worries; and just as she was beginning to hope that she might in a measure forget them, this letter arrived to uncover the old wounds and make them ache afresh. She was weaker than she used to be, and now, as she felt the need of a strong heart to lean on, Geoffrey arose to her remembrance. She recalled him, with Teddy in his arms, that night of the dance; he had never looked more manly than when gently soothing the little fellow's fears; and again at the keeper's cottage on the hill, when such tender pity had looked down on the poor suffering baby. Norah knew she could trust him without one moment's hesitation with herself and all whom she loved. She smiled as she thought how unlikely it was that she and Geoffrey should ever meet by chance in London, this great crowded London, where you might live for years beside your next-door neighbour and hardly know his name at the end. But the smile very soon gave place to tears, Norah being at present rather like an April day, when showers are sadly ready to fall; and as her thoughts went back to the Highlands and the 'days that are no more,' she leaned her head on the pillow and indulged in a good cry. She felt better after it; and bathing her face and smoothing her hair, she repaired to her mother's room, where she was resting on the sofa, to ask her how she felt.

Mrs. Grant's quick eyes soon noticed traces of trouble on her daughter's face; but she only kissed her warmly, as Norah beat up her cushions and made her more comfortable, and said, 'I am afraid your duties of sick-nurse to us both have been rather too much for you, dear: you look pale and worn; you must begin to take regular exercise again, and get back some of the Highland roses to your cheeks!' And Norah answered cheerfully, scolding herself for having been discontented when so many blessings had been given to her. She was a brave girl after all, this Norah Grant!

CHAPTER XVII.

'Patience is sorrow's salve.' CHURCHILL.
'He is truly valiant that can wisely suffer.'
SHAKESPEARE.

WILL you come with me to a house in Porchester-terrace; never mind the number; the same people don't live there now, and the house has been so altered you would not know it again. I want to show you Geoffrey's home, and introduce you to Geoffrey's mother.

Only two members in this family: 'the only son of his mother, and she was a widow.' How many a tale lies hid under these oft-quoted words! and Geoffrey had not always been an only son.

On the morning on which I have chosen to introduce you to this particular house in Porchester-terrace, mother and son were seated at breakfast—the only occupants of the room, unless we except a beautiful collie-dog, demurely seated beside her master, not begging, but watching with her soft brown eyes every morsel he put into his mouth. They were seated at either end of the table;

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Mrs. Lindsay occupied with her duties as tea-maker; and he dividing his attention between his mother, his breakfast, his newspaper, and his dog. There was very little resemblance between Geoffrey and his mother. She was a little lady, looking older than her years, for she could not have been more than sixty; yet her hair was nearly white, and it accorded well with some of the deepest lines on her face. A slight little lady, with a sweet gentle face, and a figure that might almost have belonged to a young girl, it was so erect and graceful. She invariably wore black satin relieved by pretty lace frills and ruffles, and soft delicate caps to correspond. It was long since she had abandoned her widow's-cap. The husband, still so faithfully but quietly mourned, was ever present in her thoughts, and it did not require this outward token of sorrow to keep his honoured memory fresh. Geoffrey was everything to his mother, his mother everything to him. His manner with young children was enough to tell one what it would be with old age; the two generally go hand-in-hand, and the man who considers it beneath him to be courteous to little girls is never truly chivalrous to women, old or young. Norah had often privately wished she could see Geoffrey and his mother together; he had frequently spoken of her, and many were the letters she had seen addressed to 'Mrs. Lindsay, No. — Porchester-terrace, Bayswater, W.'

As his mother handed Geoffrey his cup, she remarked, looking proudly at the handsome face opposite her, 'Geoff, how is it you have told me so little about your visit this year? Generally you have so much to say on your return; and Lassie and I have

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heard nothing as yet; we are quite curious to know more.'

'Lassie must restrain her curiosity, I am afraid. It is a fault I really cannot encourage in her,' and Geoffrey caressingly patted the glossy head. 'You, mother, shall hear all in good time; but I am afraid my answer must sound rather a paradox at first. In some respects I never was so happy, in others I never remember spending such an utterly miserable time; but of one thing I am certain—I never was so glad to get home. Some other time we will talk the matter over, but not just now, I think. Thank Heaven, I have been blessed with a mother who never nags her only son!' and Geoffrey stooped down to kiss the sweet little lady, with something of the protecting manner he would have adopted towards a child.

'What are you going to do this morning, mother? Walk, work, or drive? I stand very much in need of some new silk socks, if you feel inclined to knit. I suppose my studio is in rather a muddle, after its master's long absence? Lassie and I will betake ourselves there, and begin to work in earnest. I have a number of sketches of beautiful scenes you would like to see, mother; will you come by and by and inspect them, or shall I bring them to you?'

'I will come; I shall love to see the places my boy has visited; and remember, Geoff, I am ready at any time to hear about the other matter. There are many paradoxes in life, which only patience can unravel; we must wait.'

'Hard work, though, mother, that patient waiting, especially when it seems that it can do no good. But we will talk over the matter some other time, if you are willing; and Geoffrey whistled to his dog and departed.

It was very pretty, this home of Geoffrey Lindsay's. Money had evidently not been spared in the furnishing, yet there was an entire absence of any ostentatious display: all was in perfect taste, and the most artistic eye could not have found anything wherewith to be disturbed. The few pictures on the walls were well chosen, there was a restful feeling in the colouring of the whole room; no affecting this particular style or that: everything accorded well together, and spoke of a refined taste. Geoffrey proceeded to his studio, and here a woman's hand was visible. In the arrangement of the dining and drawing rooms, the son's taste seemed to have guided the mother's; but here, the case had just been reversed. A lady's hand had been at work, from the beautiful stand of growing flowers, no servant ever touched, to the many graceful articles scattered about the place. There was a special chair for Mrs. Lindsay, and many were the times she made use of it: this, her son had provided. Lovers they were, this mother and her son, in the truest sense of the word.

Geoffrey began to unpack a large case of unfinished pictures, which had arrived with him some few days previously; and as he continued his work, he glanced, now with a smile, now with a sigh, at each sketch as it appeared. Presently he came across a little picture—perhaps the smallest in his collection—which he handled tenderly, almost reverently. A very simple picture: only a young girl's head, with soft gray eyes, and rough curly hair (alas for Miss Duff's advice!)—that was all. It was only the duplicate to a portion of a picture Geoffrey had painted during that happy miserable visit of his.

Lassie thought her master must

have gone to sleep, he remained so long on his knees before it; so she came round to investigate the matter for herself, placed her head lovingly on his shoulder, and proceeded to examine the picture with him, giving an affectionate lick as she did so. Geoffrey looked up, reminded by the touch that he had a good morning's work before him; he patted Lassie on her handsome back, and observed half-comically, half-pathetically, 'Lassie, my lady, be thankful you have never been in love!' Then, sitting down and calling her to him, he continued, as she placed her two front paws on his knees, and looked intelligently into his face, 'How would you welcome a young mistress, Lassie, supposing you ever got one?' and as the dog wagged her bushy tail in answer, and bestowed another affectionate lick on him, he took it to mean she would politely receive such an addition. He patted her approvingly, and then, motioning her to a seat near himself, set to work in earnest. He soon disposed of his many sketches, some on easels, some in portfolios; but the portrait of the girl with the soft gray eyes was laid carefully away in the drawer of a cabinet. Even after he had deposited it there, and shut and locked the drawer, he opened it more than once again, and gazed at the sweet face looking up at him. Presently, with a determined air, he locked the drawer, and said sharply to Lassie, 'Now, no more of this foolish idling, my lady; you and I must set to work and make up for lost time. Ay, lost, indeed, I fear,' he added, somewhat sadly; and the dear wise dog wagged her tail, and seated herself close to his easel, as if to say, 'Cheer up, master! Whatever happens, remember you always have me; I will never

desert you, dear master!' At least, that is what Geoffrey read in his dog's loving eyes; he patted her once more, told her she was a good friend, and some day he would paint her portrait. Geoffrey sometimes held quite long conversations with his favourite; it was perhaps just as well that his studio was built out from the house and they could not be overheard, else he might have been taken for one slightly demented. But I think any one who has ever possessed a loving faithful dog can understand the pleasure there is in talking to it. If you feel depressed, out of sorts, or worried about something, no need to explain particulars to the intelligent creature: the tone of your voice is enough; he feels for you at once and sympathises to the best of his doggy abilities; or if you are in a particularly gay state of mind, how quickly the dear animal finds it out and enters into your joy, bounding round you, barking cheerfully to show that your happiness makes his! If all our clever fellow-creatures were as ready with their sympathy as are these dumb friends, how doubly our joys would be increased, and how lightened would our troubles be! If any one chances to read these lines who is not a dog-lover, I am sorry; but he could have missed the passage, had he so chosen, and I am only too thankful to be able to pay my small tribute of affection to many dear doggies, some of whom have passed quietly away, and some of whom still live, adding much to the happiness of the homes of which they form some of the most respected members.

One old pet, particularly, rises before my memory as I write. I should like every one to know her name, she has brought nothing but honour on it; but she

might not like to be made public, as she is, by nature, very modest and retiring. Suffice it to say that eleven happy years have passed over her head since she arrived at her present home, a little curly puppy of three months old; and the love that she inspires only grows deeper, as one year after another passes over her respectable fat back; and I know well that, when at last she departs this life, there will be tears shed for her—bitter tears—as for a friend who is no more.

Geoffrey had been dabbling away for some time, rather lazily, if the truth be confessed, for after his long holiday he did not feel much inclined to settle down to work, when a knock came at the door, and his mother's face appeared in the doorway.

'Shall I look at the sketches now, Geoff?'

'Come in, mother, they are all ready for your inspection,' and Geoffrey wheeled up the armchair, placing it at a convenient distance from the easel; then he began to exhibit his productions.

'First, mother, this is the house, not that Jack built, but Robin Lodge. I took this soon after my arrival—only a rough sketch, you see; but I like to have it as a remembrance.'

'Of your miserable visit, Geoff?'

'No, mother; the happy part of it.'

'Now, which was your room, my son?'

'This little one; you can just see the window round the corner.'

Mrs. Lindsay gazed at the sketch with renewed interest.

'Here is one taken from the side of the lake, with Ben Wyvis in the distance,' and Geoffrey exhibited the picture, over which he and Norah had become acquainted. He seemed loth to place this sketch aside, and lingered some

time over it, discussing its beauties in all their bearings. When all had been examined and duly admired by Mrs. Lindsay (who would have seen beauty in the veriest daub, provided only her son had painted it), Geoffrey seated himself beside his mother, and, stroking Lassie's glossy head, began: 'Mother, you remember I spoke to you about a certain troublesome matter at breakfast this morning, and we settled to discuss it in detail at some future time. Well, I have been thinking it over, and now, if you have nothing better to do, shall we have a little talk about it—you and Lassie and I?'

'Go on, my dear, I am ready,' but Mrs. Lindsay looked a trifle anxious.

Geoffrey waited a moment, still gently stroking the dog's head; then, glancing up, he caught his mother's eye, fixed affectionately and inquiringly upon him.

'The truth is, mother,' he said, 'I don't quite know where to begin my story; but perhaps, as it is illustrated, I had better show you the frontispiece.'

'Dear Geoff, speak plainly; I don't quite understand you, my boy.'

'I was speaking as plainly as I could, as you will understand when I show you the frontispiece. I have it here. The story, you see, is not published yet, but the picture I cut out; and now, you and I will look at it together,' and Geoffrey moved to his cabinet, drew out the portrait already mentioned, and, without another word, handed it to his mother. She smiled as she took it, and observed,

'Ah, Geoff, I thought there must be some reason like this for the paradox; it ceases to be one now! This is a sweet face; who is it, dear?'

'It is the portrait of the only lady I have ever seen whom I should like to ask you to receive as a daughter; mother, if one day I can present her to you as such, my greatest wish, nay, my most earnest prayer, will have been granted! So much for the happy side of the paradox; but the sad part is, that I can see no chance of this conclusion being arrived at;' and beginning at the beginning, Geoffrey related the story of his hopes and fears (alas, the latter predominated). He did not betray Percival's tiresome confidences—only told her what he had himself witnessed in the conservatory, told her what Miss Duff had related to him; and then, looking up, said quietly, but rather bitterly, 'Now, mother, do your duty, and tell your son how foolish it is that, with all these facts staring him in the face, he cannot make up his mind to believe that there can be no hope for him.'

'I should be sorry to tell you anything of the kind, dear boy. *Nil desperandum* has always been a favourite motto of mine. Only I cannot quite understand the different facts of your story. They do not seem to agree with your frontispiece in any way. Forgive me, my boy; but surely, either the artist has idealised too much, or you are mistaken in some of your surmises.'

Geoffrey's colour rose, as he said quickly,

'Mother, if you only knew how far short that picture comes of the original; if you only knew what she is in reality—in character, I mean—there was no need of flattery to make this lovely!'

'I do not doubt it; far be it from me to disparage in any way this young lady. I know perfectly that any girl whom my boy could choose I would gladly welcome as

a dear daughter. But I feel convinced that in some way you are mistaken about this; no girl, such as you have described Miss Grant to be, would care two straws for such a man as Mr. Leicester: If I had been you, I would not have laid so much stress on what this foolish Miss Duff told you. You know we ladies get sadly gossippy sometimes, and who can tell all the evil that is done by the foolish talking of silly old women?'

'Oblige me by not classing yourself among them, mother mine,' said Geoffrey, smiling. 'I would as soon expect to see you fly as turn gossip. No, I would not implicitly have believed what Miss Duff told me, had it not been that I thought I could myself corroborate her information.'

Mrs. Lindsay was silent for a minute, then she remarked somewhat timidly,

'Then, Geoff, do you think you have any right to this picture? Will it do you any good having it constantly by you? Will it not stir up memories which were better left undisturbed?'

'Mother,' said Geoffrey, with some warmth, 'I could not part with this now! I could not do it. Where can be the harm? No eyes but yours and mine will ever see it, and Lassie's,' he added, smiling a little; 'but I can trust her, she is as safe a confidante as you are. No, mother, whatever happens, I must keep my picture.'

'Keep it, then, my boy, and may your present trouble end happily!'

'Thanks; at present I confess that seems little likely; but I will try to make your favourite motto mine. And, mother, if you don't mind, we won't talk of this again, at least for some time; let us bury the subject between us now, and carefully cover it up. Perhaps

when I am quite an old man we will dig it up again.'

'I fear some one else will have to assist in the operation if you wait till then, dear. Lassie and I will both be gathered to our rest; but I can't help hoping that long before then everything may have come to a happy conclusion. It shall be as you say, though, and we will not talk about this again till you choose. I am thankful for a son who is not ashamed to make a confidante of his mother;' and the old lady laid down the picture she had throughout the conversation held in her hand, as tenderly as Geoffrey could have done, and quietly quitted the room.

Later on that morning, master and dog started, as was their custom, for a midday walk together. Now on ordinary occasions, when they arrived at the Bayswater-road, they turned towards the Park, where they usually took their morning exercise. Lassie, who was careering along some way in front to-day, turned to the left, and set off at a good round pace towards her favourite Park. She was a worldly-minded dog was Lassie, and felt much aggrieved if she did not regularly go through this routine. She liked to see how things were going on abroad, and if there were any change in the fashion in which dogs from Mayfair carried their tails. But this morning master and dog held different opinions; each was equally determined. Lassie was whistled to, called by name, scolded, coaxed, all to no purpose; she evidently considered that her master held entirely mistaken views which she would in no way countenance. Why, any one who knew anything of fashionable life attended the Park at this time: how could he turn his

back on that delicious soft grass, which seemed made expressly to be rolled on! She had often, in dog-language, tried to induce her master to indulge in this delightful pastime, but to no purpose—he never would be persuaded. No, Lassie was firm; and at last, waxing wroth as he discovered that he was becoming a laughing-stock to a group of street children, Geoffrey marched back in much ire to his tiresome retainer, produced a thick chain, and, attached to this, poor Lassie was ignominiously led in the detested direction. On they went, and, even to stretch a point, the walk from Porchester-terrace to Addison-gardens cannot be called pleasant. But Geoffrey appeared wholly unconscious of the surrounding scenery; he stalked along, and though usually a well-mannered man, certainly scanned far too closely, for the laws of politeness, the face of every young girl he passed.

Once Lassie thought her master meditated strangling her in return for her disobedience, for he suddenly quickened his pace, and the poor dog was dragged unmercifully after him, without being able to account in any way for his eccentric behaviour. There was nothing she could discover to warrant such conduct; no handsome dogs on the path, not even a temptingly frightened cat! Certainly, some two or three hundred yards in front she could discern the figure of a girl walking with quick springy steps in the same direction as they were going; but what on earth could their business be with her? Yet evidently she was in some way the cause of their increased pace, for as they overtook her, Lassie, glancing up in her master's face, saw an expression of disappointment pass over it, and her loving heart felt sorry for

him. Evidently, she reasoned, he must have taken the young lady for some one else.

They wandered on till they had reached and passed Addison-gardens; then Geoffrey silently turned, released Lassie, and they slowly retraced their steps.

The dog soon knew this particular part of the world well, for almost every day they took this same walk together, and still Lassie failed to find a reason for so doing; but being of a philosophical turn of mind she soon determined that if this daily routine must be gone through,

senseless though it appeared, she might just as well submit with a good grace.

Poor Geoffrey! he did not enjoy these walks any more than his dog, though for different reasons. Like Lassie, he saw no beauty in this part of London; the Park was far more to his taste, and he often returned home looking tired and disappointed. Strange that he should still so persistently continue doing what gave him after all no satisfaction! O ye sympathetic friends, pity the sorrows of a sworn bachelor when he has begun to change his mind!

(To be continued.)

THE GRACES.

A Valentine.

WHEN the faiths of the world were without a doubt,
And the loves of the world were true ;
When the fires of the gods were not yet stamped out,
And the troubles of men were few,

Three goddesses walked by a shady stream,
'Neath the glowing skies of Greece,
Who were sprung from the father of gods supreme,
And were Majesty, Joy, and Peace.

And the men of those days, who their presence felt,
Had named them the Graces three;
And worshipped their smiles, at their altars knelt,
And sought for them steadfastly.

Ah, those were the days when a clear blue sky
Smiled down on a joyful earth,
Whose daughters and sons raised to heaven their cry
Of unfettered unfeigned mirth.

But though the sun has as warm a ray,
And the rivers as calmly flow ;
Though the sea of to-day sings as sweet a lay,
And the flowers as brightly blow,

The faiths of to-day are no longer warm,
And the thoughts of to-day not calm ;
The hymns of to-day can no longer charm,
And our troubles can find no balm.

In these days of sorrow and hopeless graves,
When the winds of Time have called
On the ocean of Life fierce angry waves,
Man bows his head appalled.

Where now can we look for the forms of peace
Which our fathers worshipped of old ?
Must the hope which they held for ever cease ?
Are the loves of the world all cold ?

No : surely these maids of the past are here,
They are walking the world again ;
Their eyes as of yore shine kindly and clear,
And they hate as of yore our pain.

Majestic Ethel, and Gertrude's mirth,
And the peace of Hilda's smile,
Have recalled to a doubting sorrowing earth
The pleasures it lost for a while.

And although our song must unworthy be
Of these Graces who haunt us to-day,
Yet the poets of Greece sang less truthfully,
And we worship as fondly as they.